AN HISTORICAL
GEOGRAPHY
OF EUROPE

CENTRAL EUROPE

From a German map of 1501

(see page 89)

AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF EUROPE
800–1789

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PREFACE

THIS little book is not written by a geographer, but by a historian who believes in the historical value of geography. It is his business to talk about history with his pupils; and he finds that these discussions usually end with the refrain, 'Let's look at the map'.

History is not often at the mercy of geography. Perhaps an expert in the climate of Mesopotamia could have foretold the present state of Babylon, or of Ur of the Chaldees; but in nine situations out of ten men are free to make a good or a bad use of their geographical opportunities. Yet the wheel of time is interlocked, at every turn, with the wheel of space. There is no fact or figure in history that is not better and more truly drawn against its geographical background.

How to use maps in history can be learnt by using them in daily life. If you took the Duke of Wellington for a drive in the country, he could tell you what you would see in the next valley, because 'he had spent his life guessing what was behind the hill'. But it was not really guessing: it was arguing from a life-long use of maps. Every time you plan a bicycle ride on the map 'to avoid the hills'; every time you steer your way, by map and compass, through a mountain mist; every time you try to visualize from the map a district you are visiting for the first time, you are being introduced to the historical geography of Europe. You can feel as the Danes felt when they first sailed up an English estuary, or the Vandals, when they sighted Spain from some pass in the Pyrenees. You can realize how the situation of roads and bridges influenced a campaign; how the bend of this river, or the slope of that hill, made all the difference between victory and defeat. You

can understand how the government of a country, no less than the laying out of an estate, depends upon its communications by water or by land.

A good map can be used not only horizontally, but also vertically. The function of geography is not merely to help the historian to 'guess what is behind the hill', but also to lift him above his immediate surroundings, and to give him an imaginative view of a whole country, or of half the world. Cities are now mere dots on the map, and rivers thin blue lines; great armies move almost imperceptibly along the roads; the fastest fleet scarcely ripples the sea. We can see at a glance the rise and fall of nations, the strange and wonderful activities of the human hive,

> And take upon 's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies.

The scope of the chapters that follow is that of the History Preliminary Examination at Oxford; it is wide enough to cover the courses of medieval and modern European history usually followed in Secondary Schools.

The maps are of two kinds: a general physical map of each principal part of Europe, and special maps illustrating points discussed in the text.

The tables are intended to provide a historical counterpart to each chapter of the book, without burdening it with summaries of historical facts.

The author has no right and no wish to dogmatize. He is simply expressing ideas that have come to him from 'looking at the map'.

J. M. T.

April 1929.

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INTRODUCTION

'A BIT of humanity and a bit of land.' This definition
of the State puts our starting-point in the simplest
possible terms. Old-fashioned history used to deal
with Emperors of Rome and Kings of England as
though they lived in the same kind of country, enjoyed
the same kind of climate, and ate the same kind of
food: or else as though they lived nowhere in particular,
and in no special surroundings, but just ruled and
fought and died in the pages of a story-book. Old-
fashioned geography used to describe continents and
islands as though they were only shapes on a map,
without any regard to the people who lived on them.
What modern history and geography say is that, if we
want to understand the people, we must study them in
the country where they live, and, if we want to under-
stand the country, we must study it in connexion with
the people who live in it. In other words, the country
would not be what it is, if the people did not live in it,
and the people would not be what they are, if they did
not live in the country. Exactly in what way, and to
what degree, a people alters a country, or a country
alters a people, is one of the things that we may hope
to find out in the course of our inquiry.

The idea that a people is altered by the country that
it lives in is not new. It occurred to the Greeks (for
instance, to Aristotle) more than two thousand years
ago; and it was taken up again, not very much later, by
the Roman writer, Strabo. In the sixteenth century the
Frenchman, Bodin, noticed that Spaniards were gener-
ally healthier in their own country, and had a better

appetite, than Frenchmen. He thought that north Europeans used force to get what they wanted, whilst south Europeans used cunning : and he explained this by saying that northerners had more heat inside their bodies, to make up for their being colder on the surface. Many later writers have carried on this line of argument. Some have even gone so far as to say that, if a country or a climate is of a certain kind, the people who live in it are bound to have a certain character. 'Give me the map of a country,' said one writer, ' its configuration, its climate, its waters, its winds, and all its physical geography; give me its natural productions, its flora, its zoology; and I will pledge myself to tell you what the man of that country will be, and what part that country will play in history.' This is, of course, going too far. The most that the geography of a country does for its inhabitants is to make certain things possible for them, and certain things impossible. Within these limits it is themselves, and themselves alone, who settle what they do and what they become. Nature permits some things, and forbids others; it makes some things easy, and others difficult; but it does not compel or enforce anything. The most, therefore, that a geographer can say is that, if certain conditions of land and sea, of mountain and river, of winds and rain, of heat and cold, are present in a country, it is likely that its history will correspond.

It is the aim of the present inquiry to take the main periods and events of European history, from the beginning of the ninth to the end of the eighteenth century, and to see how far they can be explained on these lines.

We must begin by looking at a map of the world.

In this map we generally think of Europe, Asia, and Africa as three separate continents. We ignore the fact that Europe is joined to Africa (though only by a few miles of sand) at the Isthmus of Suez, and to Asia along the whole length of the Ural mountains. Leaving Africa out of the question, we may very well say that Europe and Asia are one continent, and call it Eurasia. Now, if we look at this continent, as a whole, we see at once what a small bit of it Europe is, no more than a promontory at its far western end, corresponding more or less to the south-eastern promontory called the Malay Peninsula. But what is peculiar about it, and goes far to explain its great historical importance, is its western longitude, its temperate latitude, and the way in which it is split up into peninsulas and islands by the overflowing sea. Why were these peculiarities important? Because they occurred nowhere else in the northern hemisphere, and because they were specially fitted to encourage men to settle there, and to enable them to develop the arts of government and civilization. The earliest movements of population that we know of were from the high waterless plateaus of central Asia towards the lower and moister lands by the sea. There were movements east and south, as well as west. But it was in the far west that these people found most of what they wanted: sunshine without drought, rainfall that was not a deluge, heat and cold that were never unbearable; mountains, but not too high; plains, but not too wide or flat; rivers that were navigable; seas split up into bays, and sprinkled with islands; countries where the shepherd could find grass for his flocks, and the labourer soil to till and plant, and the hunter forests full of game; countries large enough for those who

wished to wander, and small enough for those who wished to settle down. Such was Europe (*v.* Map A).

Three races are generally said to have been concerned in these earliest movements into Europe: (1), the Nordic race, tall, long-headed people with fair complexions, whose descendants are found chiefly in Scandinavia, Holland, north Germany, and Great Britain; (2), the Alpine race, short, sturdy, round-headed people with darker colouring, whose descendants are to be found in central France, Switzerland, northern Italy, southern Germany, and the Carpathians; and (3), the Mediterranean race, long-headed like the Nordics, but smaller and darker like the Alpines; their descendants are found in southern Italy, Spain and Portugal, southern France, and the western side of the British Isles. Of these races the Mediterranean came first, more than 5,000 years before Christ; the Alpine next; and the Nordic last, from 2,000 to 1,000 years B.C. These races have become so mixed in later centuries that it is risky to say too much about their character: but it is likely that the Alpine race were mostly agriculturalists, that the Mediterranean race had a gift for art and literature, and that the Nordic race were active, adventurous people, with a turn for government and organization.

The present nations of Europe have been made up by various blends of these three races, and a pinch or two of other and later stocks. It would be interesting if we could explain European history as the working out of these component racial characters. French history, for instance, has always been influenced by the fondness of the French people for agriculture: we English have shown more aptitude for adventurous living and colonization overseas. Is this because they

Land over 3000 ft.
Sea over 500 fathoms
Miles
0   200   400   600
Note. Frontiers of Charlemagne's Empire ⌁⌁⌁

MAP A.   EUROPE (PHYSICAL)

1. Notice how symmetrical Europe is. A line from Cape St. Vincent to Moscow divides it into a northern and a southern half. The British Isles balance Italy : Denmark closes the Baltic, as Greece closes the Black Sea : the mountains of Norway balance the plateau of Asia Minor.

2. The northern half is mainly plain-land, the southern mainly mountainous ; the North Sea and Baltic are shallow, the Mediterranean is deep ; the northern coast-lands look towards the New World, the southern towards the Old ; the northern area is richly fed by rivers, the southern area (the Black Sea excepted) has hardly any ; and the differences are summed up in the contrast between the thalassic position of Italy, and the oceanic outlook of England.

have a strong blend of the Alpine race in their ancestry, and we have none? Is the 'Celtic' genius for music and poetry due to the Mediterranean strain which coincides with the Celtic-speaking people of Cornwall, Wales, and the Scotch Highlands? Is the Protestantism of northern Europe a result of its Nordic individualism? Such notions, though suggestive, are too simple to express more than part of the truth; just as the character of a man's great-grandparents may throw some light on his conduct, but cannot really explain it. In any case speculations of this kind carry us outside the sphere of historical geography.
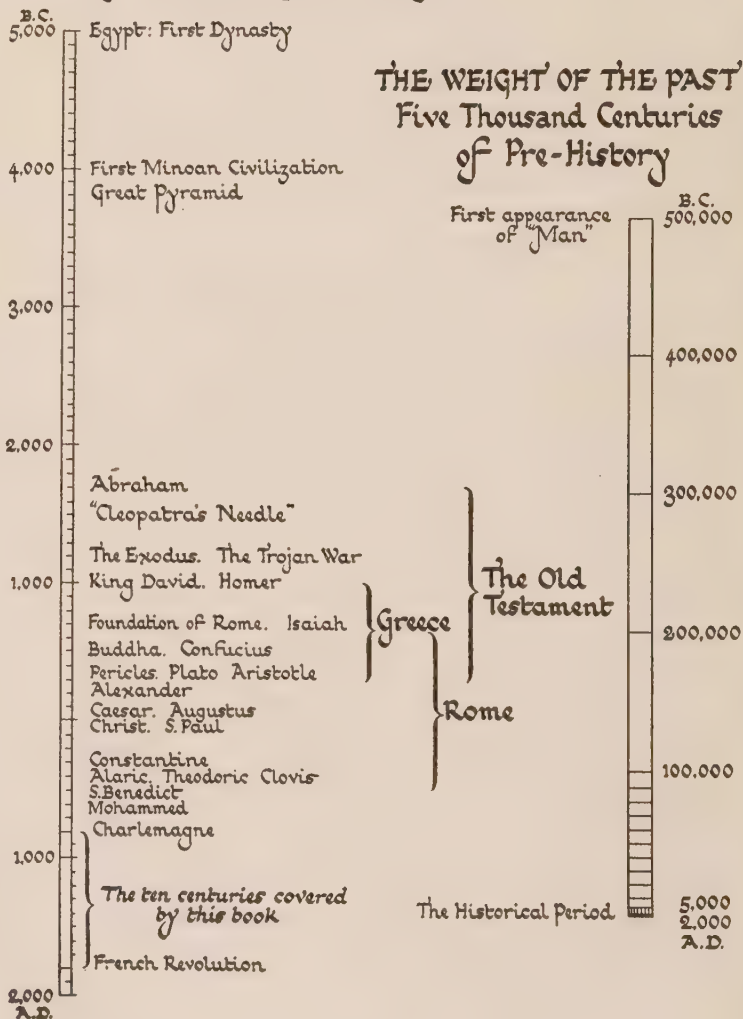
I. THE BREAK-UP OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

LET us now take a long step forward in history, and come to the time at which our period begins—the opening of the ninth century A.D. But in order to understand the state of Europe at this time we must stop on the way, and watch a fresh movement of peoples from east to west, from Asia into Europe, which took place in the centuries immediately before this date.

I

Ancient history ends, and medieval history begins, with the 'barbarian invasions' of the fourth century A.D. Nomad peoples from the east and north broke up the unity of the old Roman world, and became the raw material out of which were fashioned the disunited nations of medieval and modern Europe. Their appearance raises more than one geographical question.

First, how far were the routes that they followed, and the settlements that they made, determined by the climate and configuration of the invaded countries? In meeting this question it must be realized from the outset that we are dealing, for the most part, not with organized invasions, but with undirected movements by nomad families or tribes. If they came to fight, they were not led by a general staff, or provided with maps and guide-books. If they came to barter, or to cultivate the ground, there was no Board of Trade to put them in touch with the best markets, no Ministry of Agriculture to instruct them about soils and crops. The leader of a peaceful caravan followed the lie of the land, the line (geographically) of least resistance. The chief of a war-band pursued his retreating enemy by the

Seventy Centuries of History

B.C.
5,000 — Egypt: First Dynasty

THE WEIGHT OF THE PAST
Five Thousand Centuries
of Pre-History

4,000 — First Minoan Civilization
Great Pyramid

First appearance
of "Man"

B.C.
500,000

3,000 —

400,000

2,000 —

Abraham
"Cleopatra's Needle"

300,000

The Exodus. The Trojan War
1,000 — King David. Homer

The Old
Testament

Foundation of Rome. Isaiah
Buddha. Confucius
Pericles. Plato Aristotle
Alexander
Caesar. Augustus
Christ. S. Paul

Greece

200,000

Rome

Constantine
Alaric. Theodoric Clovis
S. Benedict
Mohammed
Charlemagne

100,000

1,000 —

*The ten centuries covered
by this book*

The Historical Period

French Revolution

5,000
2,000
A.D.

2,000
A.D.

track described by his spies, and his goal was wherever he could find most loot. The farmer moved on from the land that he had just used up to the nearest piece of virgin soil. The shepherd followed his flocks from one patch of grass-land to another. There was no irresistible tendency to migrate from east to west, but simply a number of practical reasons which led one person or family or tribe after another to do so. The result of these innumerable choices was, however, an appearance of a single purpose. When plotted out on a map they take the form of a continuous stream of advance along definite lines: and these lines are seen to be largely controlled by conditions of geography and climate.

The map of central Asia shows a belt of pasture-lands lying between lat. 50° and 35° N., with forests to the north and deserts to the south, and stretching all the way from long. 40° and 110° E. Isotherms (lines of equal temperature) follow its course, like telegraph lines, from end to end. The main blocks of mountains clear a way for it on right and left. This zone of land was the great highway from Asia to Europe. When the movement passed the Black Sea, it still followed the pasture-lands up the Danube valley into Hungary, still turned back from the cold and forested north, still made for the gaps between the mountain ranges at Belgrad, Trieste, Pressburg, Bâle. When the time for migration ended, and the time for settlement began, it was still a natural area—river valley, or plain, or strip of coast-land, that became the nursery of a state; though here tribal competition was already trespassing across geographical frontiers. And the original movement from east to west became confused with secondary

movements from fresh centres of dispersion in central
and northern Europe—notably those from which issued
the Northmen and the Slavs (v. Map B).

The 'barbarians' did not 'invade' an empty world.
Habitable Europe, between the forests of the north and
the deserts of the south (i.e. of north Africa), was
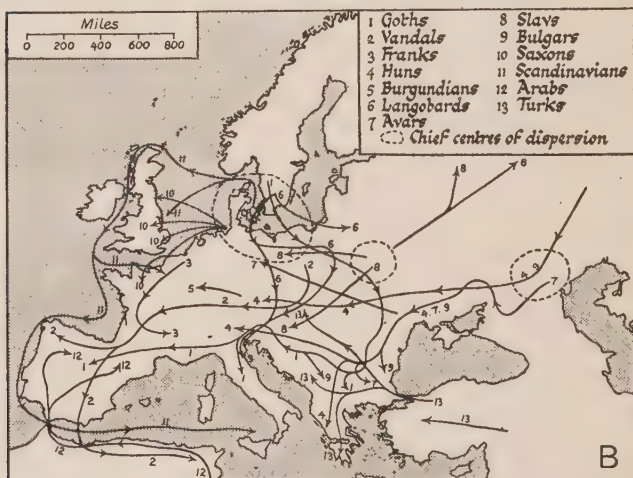
occupied and controlled at this time by the Roman
Empire. How far, then, did the geographical conditions
of the Roman Empire condition the new states into
which the 'barbarian invasions' split it up?

First, the Empire was defended against attacks from
the north-east; but there were weak spots in the
defences at which that attack broke through (v. Map
C). The Danube, the moat of the Roman castle, had
three awkward angles (A, B, and C), through which
the triple line of defences behind it—the Balkans, the
Adriatic, and the Apennines—could be turned. When

the danger became serious, Constantinople was founded to guard A, which was well outside the 500 mile radius from Rome, but well within that from the new centre. But the result was to divert the attack to B, where the valleys of the Save and Drave gave an easy access to the weak point in the Balkan barrier behind Trieste,

and to C, the natural way round the northern end of the Alps. By these routes the main body of invaders entered and occupied Italy and France. Rome died under the shock, and in dying became the mother of modern Europe. Constantinople, long safe, but unfertile, gave birth too late in life to the civilization of Russia and of the Balkan states.

When the invaders had penetrated the Roman frontiers, their wanderings and settlements were influenced by the Roman roads and the Roman provincial system (v. Map D). The roads were as straight
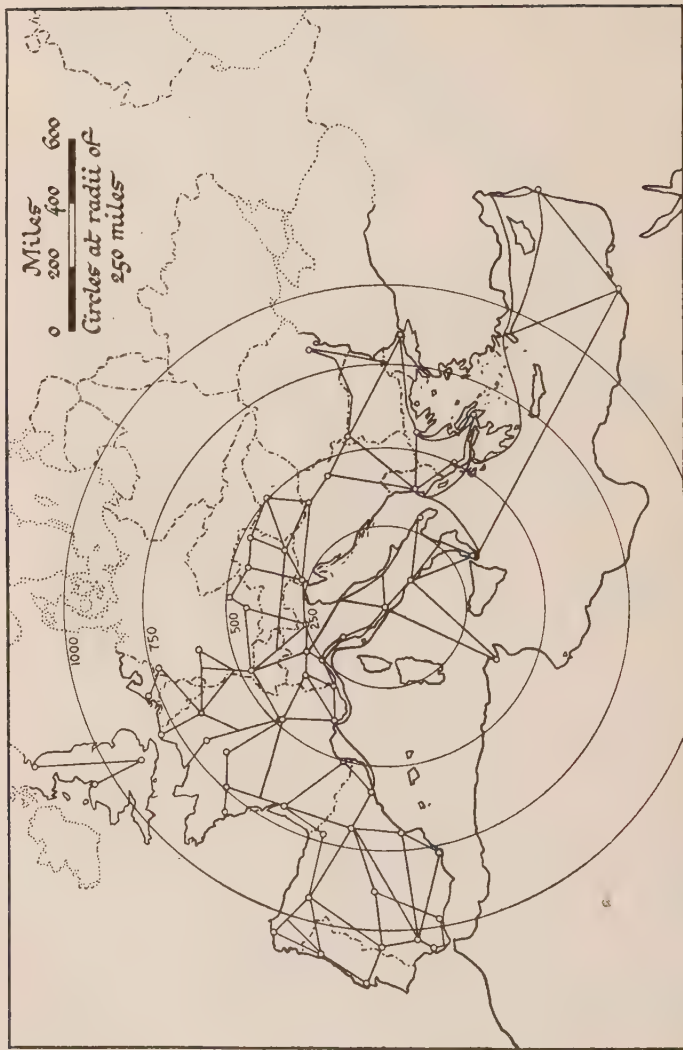
MAP D. THE ROMAN EMPIRE

as the system, which was not designed to satisfy local needs, but to make the whole Empire subservient to its centre and capital at Rome. They branched out like arteries from provincial centres, such as Lugdunum in France, or Caesarea Augusta in Spain, to military or trading posts on the circumference: and there were enough cross-roads to enable troops to be transferred from one artery to another. The 'barbarians' as a rule moved from east to west and south-west along these cross lines, at right angles to the stream of Roman power: that was partly what made their advance so hard to check. But when they settled, their settlements gathered round the old centres of government and of trade. In Spain the station of the seventh legion became Leon; Caesarea Augusta was turned into Saragossa, and Pax Augusta into Badajoz. In France the whole road-system of the country, down to the eighteenth century, was modelled on that of Rome. In the Rhine valley Cologne (Colonia), Coblenz (Confluentes), Mainz (Mogontiacum), Bâle (Basilia), and many other names show where Roman settlements once stood.

II

The tribe which played the largest part in handing on the Roman tradition to the 'barbarians' was that of the Franks. The Romans first fought them in the third century, and again in the fourth. In the fifth they broke through the weakening frontier of the Empire, and made their capital at Tournai. Under the Merovingian Dynasty (6th to 7th centuries) they occupied all France except the Midi. Charlemagne (771–814) inspired them to become an imperial race, the heirs of Rome, and the ancestors of Germany and France.

These Franks enjoyed many advantages that were not geographical. They were born fighters, who knew how to kill with the 'francisca' or 'scramasax', as well as with the iron-headed lance or bow and arrow. But the 'Law of the Salian Franks' shows that they also knew how to punish crimes of violence by suitable penalties; they had the rudiments of justice. These qualities made their chieftains admirable allies for the Romans. Merowig led them against Attila, Clovis against the Alemanni, Charles Martel against the Moors. Clovis became a Catholic, and could put Roman titles after his name. When the Empire failed, they still had the patronage of its great successor, the Church.

Geography was on their side too. Their first position on the Meuse made them the gate-keepers of Gaul against the Germans. Their second position on the Seine made them the defenders of France against the Northmen, who sailed up that river till they were stopped at the island on which stands the Cathedral of Nôtre Dame de Paris. Their third position on the Garonne enabled them to throw back the Moors into Spain. The tide of their advance spread over France, area by area, first the lowlands of the Seine and Loire, then the slopes of the Pyrenees, Cevennes, Jura, and Vosges, then the Midi, so that by Charlemagne's time they were ready to cross the Alps into Italy, and the Pyrenees into the Spanish Mark. Finally, it was their position as a Rhenish power, neither French nor German, but both, which made it possible for Charlemagne's empire to pass on what it had learnt from Rome to its two great but rival children, Germany and France.
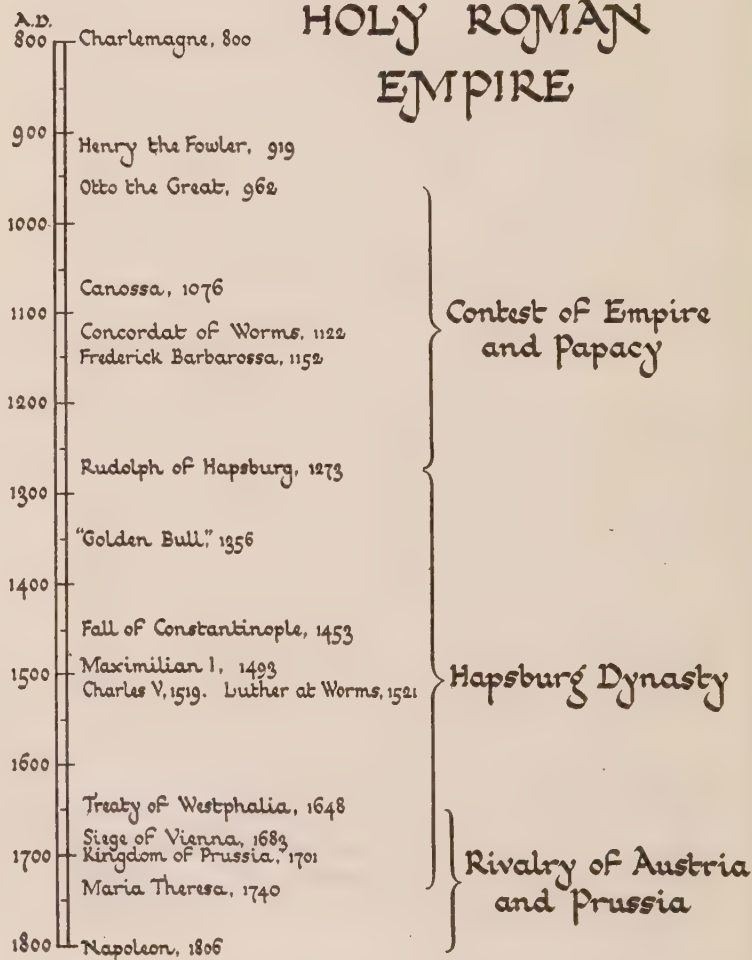
II. MEDIEVAL GERMANY

THREE processes were at work throughout the Middle Ages: (1) the survival of the Roman unity of world-government in the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Catholic Church: (2) the development of the system of society and property called feudalism into national monarchies; (3) the growth of a middle class with professional and commercial interests. The first of these processes is best studied in the history of Germany, the second in the history of France, and the third in the history of the Eastern Empire, and of the Crusades. We will take them in that order.

I

A state organized on feudal lines could only be held together by a strong central government. Charlemagne supplied this, but his sons and successors did not. Again, if the central control grew weak, not only the feudal lords became independent, but also the old tribal divisions reappeared: one law became many customs, one language many dialects, and the bond of unity was no longer the State, but the Church. This tendency to split up was further encouraged in the ninth century by the invasions of the Northmen, who could not be resisted without local alliances of feudal lords, and the local levying of feudal armies, in the districts where they appeared. But behind these causes of disunity was the lack of geographical solidarity. What does this mean? It is not necessary that areas of government should always coincide with river basins, or that frontier lines should always be drawn along

A THOUSAND YEARS
OF THE
HOLY ROMAN
EMPIRE

A.D.
800 — Charlemagne, 800

900 — Henry the Fowler, 919
Otto the Great, 962

1000 —

Canossa, 1076

1100 — Concordat of Worms, 1122
Frederick Barbarossa, 1152

1200 —

Rudolph of Hapsburg, 1273

1300 —

"Golden Bull," 1356

1400 —

Fall of Constantinople, 1453

1500 — Maximilian I, 1493
Charles V, 1519. Luther at Worms, 1521

1600 —

Treaty of Westphalia, 1648

1700 — Siege of Vienna, 1683
Kingdom of Prussia, 1701
Maria Theresa, 1740

1800 — Napoleon, 1806

Contest of Empire
and Papacy

Hapsburg Dynasty

Rivalry of Austria
and Prussia

river-courses or ranges of mountains. A geographer would probably have divided Charlemagne's empire into nine areas: the Seine and Loire valleys, the Midi of France, the Rhone basin, Lombardy, central Italy, the upper Danube, the upper Rhine, the lower Rhine, and the valley of the Weser. But there was no moment in history when each of these nine areas was under separate rule, nor would it have been to their advantage. There was nothing inherently absurd in the attempt to unify an area which, after all, is pretty much the area usually covered nowadays by Cook's tourists, and easily accessible by train from Bâle: namely France up to the Pyrenees (with a fringe of Spain), Italy as far south as Rome, and Germany as far east as the Elbe. In fact the question how big a country is matters less than the question how quickly one can get about in it. Government, like travelling, is mainly a matter of communications. And the reason why Charlemagne's empire did not last was not its size, nor its variety, so much as its lack of a proper road system, particularly in the lands east of the Rhine.

By the Treaty of Verdun (843) this empire was split up into three parts (they were probably meant at first to be temporary 'governments', not permanent states); on the west a group of provinces afterwards called France, to the east another group afterwards called Germany, and in the centre a long and narrow strip of territory, including Holland, the lower Rhine, the valleys of the Meuse, Moselle, and Rhone, together with north and central Italy, all entitled (since it had no single racial or geographical name), after its ruler Lothar, Lotharingia, or the Middle Kingdom (v. Map on p. 5). If ever a state seemed to defy geography, it was

this last. Of its three main rivers one (the Rhine) runs into the North Sea, one (the Rhone) into the Mediterranean, and one (the Po) into the Adriatic. Mountain-ranges—Vosges, Jura, Alps, and Apennines—split it into unequal parts. Nevertheless there is a broad geographical unity underlying the central part of this territory—the valleys of the Meuse, Rhine, and Rhone, and the lands between them. Eastwards the rivers flow into the Baltic or the Black Sea, westwards into the Atlantic. Here only they run north and south, draining into the North Sea and Mediterranean a land that is neither French nor German. The Middle Kingdom had another geographical advantage. It was a 'route-state', built up round the only road in the empire which could be called arterial, the road by which the Emperor travelled from his first coronation at Aix to his second at Milan and to his third at Rome: the road by which passed nearly all the business, secular and ecclesiastical, of a government that lived on the uneasy alliance of Emperor and Pope. It was very significant for the future history of western Europe that at this early date a line of communication, and a bond of common interest, should have been set up from north to south, cutting across the Franco-German connexions and rivalries that ran east and west.

The ghost of this Middle Kingdom haunted the Dukes of Burgundy, and it was the attempt to revive it in the fifteenth century which drove Charles the Bold to his doom: it embittered the long feud between Bourbons and Hapsburgs: in the seventeenth century it inspired Louis XIV with ambitions which were fatal to France; and in the eighteenth century Joseph II with designs that united his enemies against Austria: it urged

the Revolutionary armies to the goal that the French kings had failed to reach, and then robbed them of all that they had won: it was still malignantly active in 1870, and has not been laid in 1928. Some one threw a line of tree-trunks across the Thames, and called it London Bridge: over it has flowed, in ever increasing volume, the life of a great city. Charlemagne (following the Romans) built a bridge of culture and commerce from the Adriatic to the North Sea: the products of the East, the art and learning of Italy, Calvinism and the Counter-Reformation, the Law of Padua and the Liberalism of Venice have in turn passed along it: the Rhine valley has taken something from them all: and though its people do not appear as a state upon the political map of Europe, they have the character and interests of an independent people. It is little wonder, then, that this geographical and political frontier drawn by nature and man across western Europe has been the subject of so much diplomacy, and the theatre of so many wars.

II

By the Treaty of Mersen (870) the Middle Kingdom was dispersed. Whilst its southern parts broke up into the geographically distinct areas of the kingdom of Arles (the Rhone basin) and north Italy, the whole northern part of it—Friesland (now Holland), Lower and Upper Lotharingia (now western Belgium, Luxemburg, and Lorraine) and Alsace—came under the rule of the Saxon and Franconian Emperors of Germany. These emperors found themselves back in much the same position as the later rulers of Rome. The tide of barbarian invasion had swept over the old

defences of the Roman Empire: but it had not obliter-
ated the line between the Gauls, who had learnt some-
thing of Roman culture, and the Germans, who had
not. When the movement of barbarism from east to
west ceased, the movement of civilization from west
to east began again. This was the essential work of the
Empire, from which it was distracted (as the attention
of historians has also been distracted) by its double
contest with Feudalism and with the Papacy.

The conquest and civilization of Germany were con-
trolled at every stage by factors that may be summed
up as geographical. There was first the general con-
figuration of the country. Germany east of the Rhine
and north of the Bohemian mountains is a flat oblong
plain, sloping gently down to the North Sea and the
Baltic, and cut into three wide strips by parallel rivers,
whose general course is from south-east to north-west,
the Weser, the Elbe, and the Oder. This means that
it could be easily overrun, and securely held, a strip
at a time; but that its natural outlook would, in the long
run, be not eastwards or westwards, but towards the
north. And in fact, so long as the Mediterranean re-
mained the centre of European culture and commerce,
Germany languished in isolation, divided against itself:
as soon as the balance shifted (in the 15th–16th cen-
turies) to the Atlantic coast, it began to group itself into
the larger units out of which the two rival states of the
eighteenth century (Austria and Prussia), and the one
supreme state of the nineteenth (the German Empire),
were born.

If north Germany is essentially flat land, south
Germany is essentially mountain country; and whereas
the north German rivers all flow northwards, the single

river-system of south Germany, that of the Danube, leads away eastwards towards the Balkans and the Black Sea. This has always been the great trouble of Austria, and of Vienna in particular—that its chief natural signpost points the opposite way to its personal interests. The Romans, of course, knew and used the Danube valley route from the upper Rhine to the Black Sea. But throughout the Middle Ages the chief lines of travel and trade ran northwards from the Alpine passes across the upper Danube and the Main. It was not until the time of the Crusades that any considerable use was once more made of the transverse route from the Rhine by Nuremberg and Ratisbon to the middle Danube. Austria was born looking eastwards : but the political interests of its rulers ran to north and south of Vienna, until the advance of the Turks in the early sixteenth century compelled them to look to the east. The geographical fact that the three greatest rivers of the north German plain—the Elbe, the Oder, and the Vistula—all rise within little more than 100 miles of Vienna, directed Austrian trade also towards the North Sea; until, after the Thirty Years' War, in the seventeenth century, Austria began to look eastwards again, to compensate herself for the loss of the northern trade-routes. In southern Germany, then, as well as in the north, the later lines of growth were to cut across those of the earlier conquest and civilization.

Apart from the general configuration of Germany, the feature which did most to determine the lines of conquest was the forests. During what geologists call the Glacial Periods the whole of the northern European plain—all England north of the Thames, the Nether-

lands, Germany as far south as Hanover, Dresden, and Cracow, with much of Russia and the whole of Scandinavia—lay under a sheet of ice. There were also detached ice-sheets in the Alps and other mountain districts of south Germany. When the climate became warmer, and the ice melted, it left behind it, as glaciers do, a deposit of mud and gravel. On this the forests grew: first, coniferous trees (pines and firs), which like such soil; then, in still warmer times, deciduous trees (oaks, beeches, and the like), till great areas of central Europe were covered by such forests as Roman writers describe—the Hercynia silva, reaching from the Black Forest to the Carpathians, sixty days' march, the Black Forest itself (Marciana silva), the Bohemian Forest (Gabreta silva), and many others. These forests were dense and difficult, but not without glades and open spaces, in which lived a considerable population, hoeing the clearings, feeding cattle on the undergrowth, or pigs on the beech-nuts, and robbing honey from the wild bees. But no one whose ideas of tree-land are taken from modern England—in spite of all its trees, one of the least forested countries in Europe—can easily realize what an undertaking it was to lead an army or to direct a settlement in such country. Tree-felling and road-making had to go on side by side. The progress of tree-felling has been traced by learned Germans, who believe that it reached a first high-water mark under the Carolingian rulers, and a second in the fourteenth century, after which, save for a set-back during the Thirty Years' War, there was more need to plant new trees than to root up old. The evidence for these conclusions comes largely from place-names. Take an English example.

' In the district of the Weald almost every local name for miles and miles terminates in " hurst ", " ley ", " den ", or " field ". The hursts were the denser portions of the forest; the leys were the open glades where the cattle love to lie; the dens were the deep wooded valleys; and the fields were little patches of felled or cleared lands in the midst of the surrounding forest. From Petersfield and Mid-hurst, by Billinghurst, Cuckfield, Wadhurst, and Lamber-hurst, as far as Hawkshurst and Tenterden, these forest names stretch in an uninterrupted string.' [1]

So in Baden, for instance, 18 per cent. of what is now agricultural land is proved by its place-names to have been forest land in former times; and it has been reckoned that from 50 to 75 per cent. of the whole area must originally have been covered with trees. As to roads, there were no more then in Germany than there are now in any forest land of Siberia, or British Columbia. The German tribes had their meeting-places, their markets, and their centres of worship. Village was linked to village by rough tracks, which broadened a little near the larger settlements, or the Roman frontier.

It was these last that Charlemagne used for his first advances eastwards. Starting from Mainz and Cologne he penetrated and subjugated a triangle of forest-land with its apex at Magdeburg on the Elbe. The secondary centres within this triangle were determined by the native markets. These were linked up by cross-routes. Gradu-ally main lines were opened up from west to east, and served for further expansion eastwards towards the Oder. So the road-system of north Germany was built up—based, not on Roman unity of purpose (as in

[1] I. Taylor, *Words and Places*, p. 326.

France or Spain), but upon the needs of the moment, or the vagaries of the individual. And this has contributed not a little to the political disunion of the country.

Another feature to be noticed is that, in the absence of roads, and even for some time after roads were made, the rivers were much used for traffic: and the rivers nearly all run from south to north: it was consequently a long time before the north-and-south routes through Germany were as well provided for, in the matter of roads, as the east-and-west routes; and this helped to delay what we have called the natural northward development of German interests.

Sooner or later, as civilization advanced eastwards, it reached a point where it could no longer make headway against the opposition of nature and of man. Here, then, frontier provinces were set up, with special provisions for defence, and called Marks. The word has a long history, and takes many forms—the 'margin' of the territory was 'marked'; it was governed by a 'Margrave' or 'Marquess', who 'marched' through the 'murky mork' (dark forest), on a 'marc' (horse), with a 'marshal' (groom) by his side, and 'letters of marque' in his pocket, enabling him to harass the enemy beyond the frontier. Mercia in England was the frontier between the East Angles and the Welsh. Murcia in Spain was the frontier between the Christians and the Moors. In Germany almost every step of the advance is recorded in names which still appear on the map. Denmark was the frontier against the Danes. Brandenburg, the heart of the German Empire, consists of three strips of land successively held against the Poles—Altmark ('old frontier') on the west, Mittelmark

('middle frontier'), in the middle, and Neumark ('new frontier'), on the east. Moravia (the 'frontier river'), defended Austria on the north-east, and Styria (Steyermark), on the south-east. These and many other Marks (v. Map E) defended the Europe of Charlemagne and
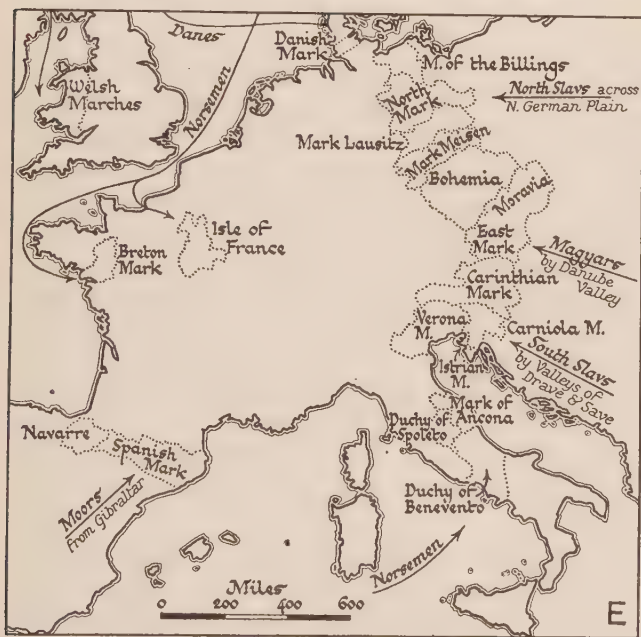
his successors against Danes, Northmen, Moors, Magyars, and Slavs, much as the Imperial provinces had defended the Europe of Augustus and the later Roman Emperors against the earlier invaders. But they had more than military importance. The points of danger attracted talent, evoked courage, and created national feeling. It was not an accident that Berlin was founded

in the North Mark and Vienna in the East Mark, or that Paris was built on an island that blocked the advance of the Vikings up the Seine. Bourbons, Hapsburgs, and Hohenzollerns all owed much of their greatness to the Mark system of medieval times.
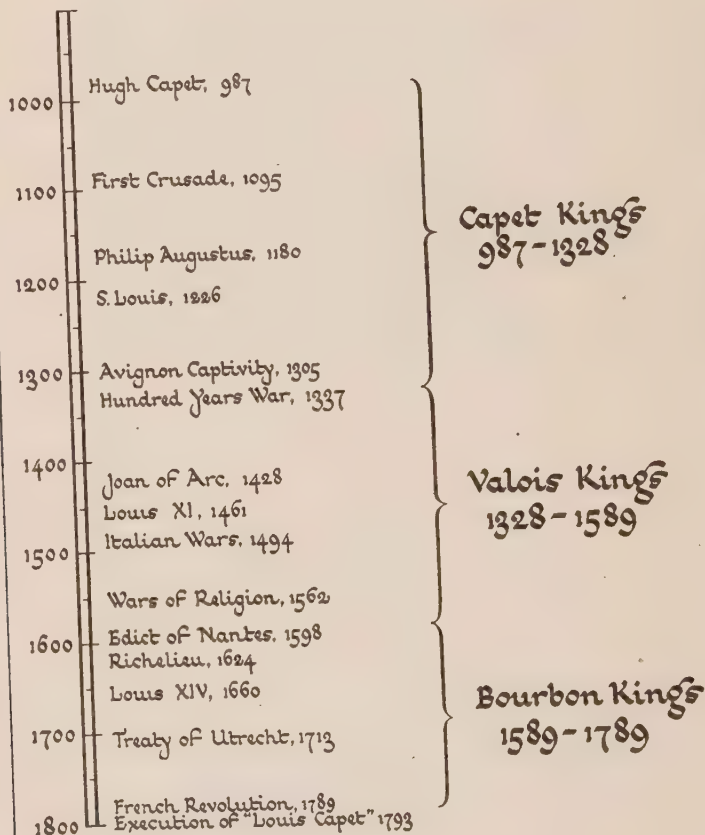
III

Two things, we have said, distracted the Emperors from their essential business of conquering and civilizing eastern Germany—Feudalism and the Papacy. The first was only indirectly a geographical question: feudal tenure of land, and a feudal constitution of society, existed in widely different lands and climates— they were, for instance, transplanted to Palestine during the Crusades. But they were doubtless encouraged in Germany by the lack of a road-system, which made centralized government very difficult; by the way in which settlements grew up piecemeal, and managed their own affairs, along river banks, or in forest clearings; and by the necessities of frontier defence, which encouraged the ambitions of semi-independent chieftains.

Again, the uneasy alliance, or misalliance, between the Emperor and the Pope was political in its motives; but it was conditioned throughout by the geographical relations of Germany and Italy. The Carolingian tradition, and the ' ghost of the Middle Kingdom ', called the Emperors across the Alps. But so did geography: for the Alps were more easy of access on the northern than on the southern side; there was a number of passes well known since Roman times— some of them earlier—and habitually used by merchants and ecclesiastics; and the Hohenstaufen Emperors

(who played the leading part in Italian affairs) had personal estates immediately to the north of the chief Alpine trade-routes, and at one point actually crossing the Alps, which must have been a constant incentive to interference in Italy.

In spite of these distractions the conquest and civilization of Germany went steadily on from the ninth to the fourteenth century. It advanced along three general lines laid down by geography: first, the flat Baltic lands in the north, as far as the outpost held by the Teutonic Knights in east Prussia against the pagans of Lithuania; secondly, the Oder valley in the centre, up to the forests and marshes of Poland; and thirdly, the Danube valley in the south, as far as the gate in the Alps and Carpathians that leads to Hungary and the Balkan peninsula. Between these three lines of advance Poland and Bohemia long stood out against attack, and retained an individuality which has marked their history ever since.

EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS
OF FRENCH
MONARCHY

1000 — Hugh Capet, 987

1100 — First Crusade, 1095

       Philip Augustus, 1180

1200 — S. Louis, 1226

       **Capet Kings
987 – 1328**

1300 — Avignon Captivity, 1305
       Hundred Years War, 1337

1400 — Joan of Arc, 1428
       Louis XI, 1461

       **Valois Kings
1328 – 1589**

1500 — Italian Wars, 1494

       Wars of Religion, 1562

1600 — Edict of Nantes, 1598
       Richelieu, 1624

       Louis XIV, 1660

       **Bourbon Kings
1589 – 1789**

1700 — Treaty of Utrecht, 1713

       French Revolution, 1789
1800 — Execution of "Louis Capet" 1793

III. MEDIEVAL FRANCE

THE essential feature of French history, from the tenth to the eighteenth century, is the development of centralized government. But that does not necessarily mean a centralized people. And it is clear from an abundance of evidence at all periods that, whilst the French monarchy became more and more absolute, the French people remained very much divided, province from province, and class from class, right down to the end of the eighteenth century. In spite of all that the Government could do, there were often times—as for instance during the Hundred Years' War, or the Wars of Religion, or the disastrous years at the end of Louis XIV's reign, or in the middle of that of Louis XV —when these divisions came dangerously near to the surface. Is there anything in the geography of France to account for this paradoxical state of things—a centralized government and a decentralized people?

1

' France,' says a modern writer, ' as her historians have long delighted to point out, is a country singularly privileged in her formation, and in the latitude she occupies. She is magnificently fed with great rivers, which flow where it is useful for commerce and agriculture that they should flow. The lines of her mountain ranges formed natural ramparts in the past, and in the south and south-west serve as great wind-screens, and sun-reflectors, creating almost tropical corners under a temperate latitude. Her indented coast opens into some capacious and sheltered harbours, and the course of the Gulf Stream bends in to soften the rainy climate of her great western peninsula, making Brittany

almost as warm as the sunnier south. Above all, the rich soil of France, so precious for wheat and corn-growing, is the best soil in the world for the vine; and a people can possess few more civilizing assets than the ability to produce a good wine at home. It is the best safeguard against alcoholism, the best incentive to temperance in the manly and grown-up sense of the word, which means voluntary sobriety, not legally enforced abstinence. All these gifts France had, and the French intelligently cherished. Between the Swiss snows and the icy winter fogs of Germany on the one side, and the mists and rain and perpetual dampness of England on the other, her cool mild sky, shot with veiled sunlight, overhung a land of temperate beauty and temperate wealth. Farther north, man might grow austere or gross, farther south idle and improvident: France offered the happy mean which the poets are for ever celebrating, and the French were early aware that the poets were right.' [1]

Looking at the map, one's first impression of France (v. Map F) is that of a country designed for political unity. Its wide unbroken sweep of plain, its long sea frontage, its three almost continuous river basins, and the semicircle of mountains at its back, reproduce in more favourable form, and under a happier climate, the configuration of north Germany. But this view ignores three districts, which do not fit into nature's plan for France, and yet cannot be left out of any attempt to give her political unity—Brittany, the Saône-Rhone valley, and the districts between the Meuse and the Rhine. Geographically, France resembles a huge amphitheatre, a Wembley stadium, of which the Pyrenees, the Cevennes, the Langres plateau, and the western heights of the Ardennes form the containing walls: behind these barriers runs a corridor—the valleys

[1] Wharton, *French Ways and their Meaning*, p. 87.

of the Rhone, Saône, and Moselle—giving occasional access to the arena: and this corridor has always been the scene of a struggle, more or less conscious, between a crowd going in and a crowd coming out—between the tendency to unite and the tendency to divide. Because this corridor led, on the whole, round France, rather than into it, its inhabitants have not generally wanted to come under French control: but because the barrier behind it—the line of the Alps, Jura, Vosges, and Hunsrück—made a better boundary than that in front of it, there was good reason why the French Government should wish to make them do so. In these frontier lands, then, there was always likely to be a contest between the unifying and the disintegrating tendencies.

Here is another reason. Government, we have said, depends very much upon communications, upon a good road-system. Now, whereas Germany east of the Rhine had to create a road-system out of the casual cart-tracks of the native tribes, France west of the Rhine inherited a well thought out and well constructed road-system, ready made, from the Romans. And whilst Germany had no capital, no one centre of government, France from a very early date had both. The importance of Paris for the history of France can hardly be exaggerated. It has played its part as a capital more effectively than any other city in Europe. But it was not always so. It owes its supremacy less to its natural advantages than to the character of the French State, and the deliberate policy of its rulers. The Roman road-system was not designed with reference to Paris. Its starting-point was Lyon, and its aims were (1) to enable Roman troops to march as
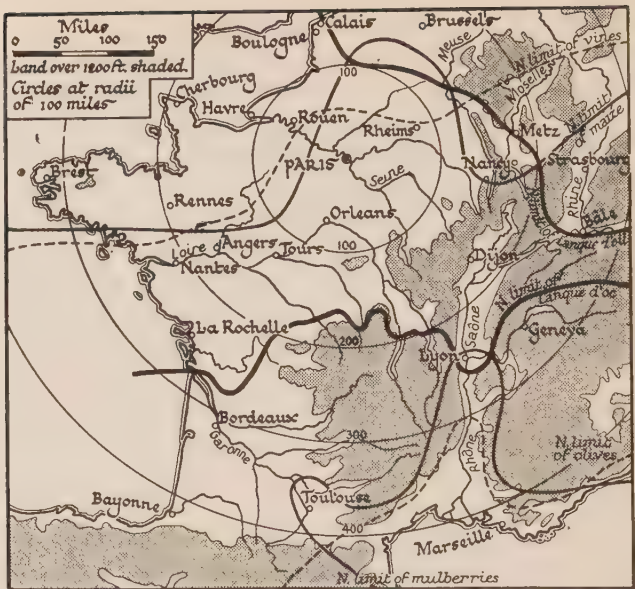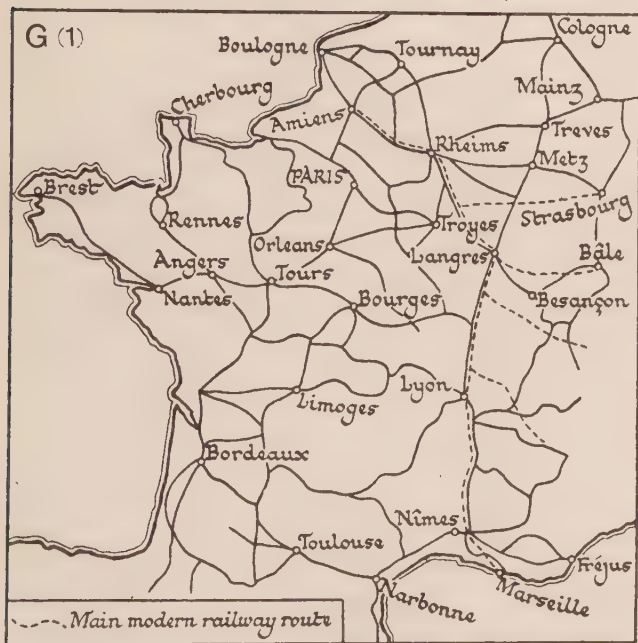
MAP F. FRANCE

Main features

1. The coastal plain of the Seine, Loire, and Garonne basins continues that of W. Germany, but with a more southern soil and climate. France mainly an agricultural country.

2. The consistent slope of this plain from the E. and SE. highlands towards the Atlantic and English Channel. Its easy outlet to these coasts by three river systems. The contrast of this call to western trade with France's historical preoccupation with its eastern frontier.

3. The geographical—linguistic—cultural line from Geneva to the Garonne. The historical influences of this difference between N. and S. France.

4. The double wall of high ground along the E. and SE. frontiers, divided by the moat of the Meuse (or Moselle), Saône, and Rhone valleys; with open doors at Toulouse, Dijon, Metz, and Brussels. The historical importance of these geographical features.

5. The position of Paris—a political centre in a geographical corner. Its nearness to the NE. frontier: its remoteness from Brittany, Bordeaux, and Marseilles. Separatist tendencies in the Midi—how far based on geographical isolation, and differences of race, culture, and climate?

quickly as possible from that point to any part of the
country; (2) to defend the line of the Rhine against
attacks from Germany; and (3) to develop the trade-
route from the Rhone valley across Champagne to the

G (1)

Boulogne   Tournay   Cologne
Cherbourg   Mainz
    Amiens   Treves
         Rheims   Metz
Brest   Strasbourg
    PARIS
Rennes   Troyes
    Orleans   Langres   Bâle
Angers
    Tours
Nantes   Bourges   Besançon

         Lyon
    Limoges
Bordeaux

         Nîmes
    Toulouse   Fréjus
                   Marseille
    Narbonne

`.----. Main modern railway route`

markets of Flanders and the tin-mines of Britain. But
now compare the Roman roads of France with the
roads in use in the eighteenth century (v. Map G). Two
main points emerge. One is that nearly all the new
roads are so designed as to direct the traffic of the
country to and from Paris, whilst the provinces have
to do the best they can with the old Roman highways.
The other is that, in spite of this attempt to centralize

it, the social and economic life of the country still tends
to run on the old provincial lines, avoiding the political
capital. Indeed a modern railway map of France would
show a great and increasing amount of traffic by
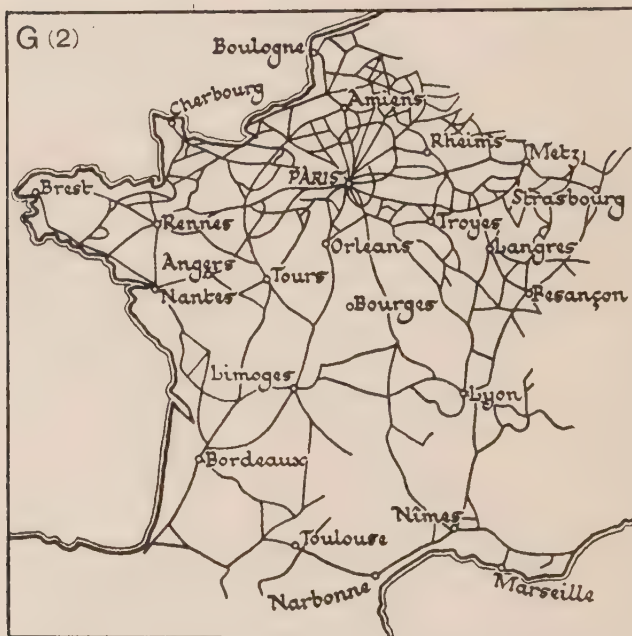
through routes from England to Italy, along the old
Roman line, by Calais, Amiens, Laon, Rheims, Chalons,
Dijon, and Bâle, avoiding Paris altogether. It would
seem, then, that here too geography helps to explain
why France tends at the same time to cling together and
to fly apart. It was the Government which tried to
rearrange the Roman road-system, so that it should
lead to and from Paris. This was useful for the kings,

but did not really suit the needs of the country. It starved the provinces of talent and trade; it favoured isolation and division; and it helped the unhealthy concentration of political interest and control in the capital.

II

This tendency to political division went with a provincial feeling more deeply engrained than any that we experience in England. It was partly the result of history. 'Even to-day', says a French writer, 'the aspect of the country along the main communications of France changes precisely where the boundaries of the Gaulish cities formerly lay.'[1] It was partly due to agricultural life, which isolates country people. But it was largely caused by the geographical diversity of the country.

There is likely to be more political unity among 75 villages, if they are all situated in the same plain, or on the banks of the same river, if their inhabitants plant the same kind of crops, and breed the same kind of cattle, than if 25 of them are in a plain, where the people grow wheat, and 25 in the hills, where they feed sheep, and 25 on the sea-shore, where they live by fishing. It makes a considerable difference, too, whether the people live in closely built villages, or in scattered homesteads. This may be due, in the beginning, to nothing more than the water-supply, or the lie of the land; but it often ends in the people acquiring different habits of life, and a different attitude towards society. Thus in France at the end of the eighteenth century it was the north-east provinces and the Midi, where

[1] Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History*, p. 87.

the villagers had the habit of 'meeting round the parish pump', that led the Revolution, and the west, where they sat by their isolated fire-sides, and took less interest in public affairs, that provided the principal opposition to it.

But, when all is said and done, the provincial spirit of the French country-side, and the parochial outlook of its people, were mainly due to the centralizing policy of the French Government. 'We must look after the heart' was the maxim of Richelieu's policy. The needs of the outlying parts of the body politic were not consulted. They consequently fell into local feuds and narrow views, which were not remedied till the Revolution. No doubt there were other causes: the mere size of the country, which made it difficult to keep in touch with the feeling of the provinces; the character of the people, who were always more ready to be ruled than to rule themselves; and the good fortune, and good policy, by which the French kings built up a royal domain rich enough to make them independent of Parliament, and its 'power of the purse'. Here, as elsewhere, geographical and other causes are at work together, and it would be an untrue simplification of the problem to pretend to explain everything as due to nature, when so much of it is due to man.

III

One further point may be considered here, because it bears both on the early history of the French monarchy and on what we have to discuss in the following chapter, the history of the Crusades. This is the voyages and settlements of the Normans or Vikings.

Driven from Scandinavia by over-population, or by

political grievances, the Northmen sailed up most of the rivers of western Europe, the Elbe as far as Hamburg, the Rhine and Moselle to Worms and Metz, the Meuse to Liège, the upper waters of the Seine, the Oise and Aisne to near Rheims, the Loire to Orléans, the Garonne to Toulouse, the Guadalquivir to Seville, the Rhone to Vienne, and the Tiber to Rome. They came in like a lion, killing and devouring: they stayed like a lamb, settling down, intermarrying, mingling their speech and customs with those of the country. They became more French than the French, more English than the English, better Catholics than the Italians. They were the leaders of western Europe in some of the typical adventures and achievements of the medieval genius.

Can geography at all explain the surprising history of the Northmen? It would be absurd to argue that living by the sea, or even sailing upon it, must alter the character of a people: but there have been nations, and the Northmen more than any, who 'took to the sea' from childhood, learnt its lessons, and acquired courage, initiative, and endurance in a contest against forces that never make a mistake and never forgive one. They had the fisherman's habit of tilling a plot of ground, and the sailor's longing for a landed estate: so they made good colonists and keen Crusaders. They knew much about gardening, and little about government: so they easily fitted themselves into the feudal system of European society. But they were quick to learn from others, and to improve upon their teachers: hence Norman castles, Norman cathedrals, and Norman methods of government in England and south Italy. Their early life in the Norwegian fiords adapted
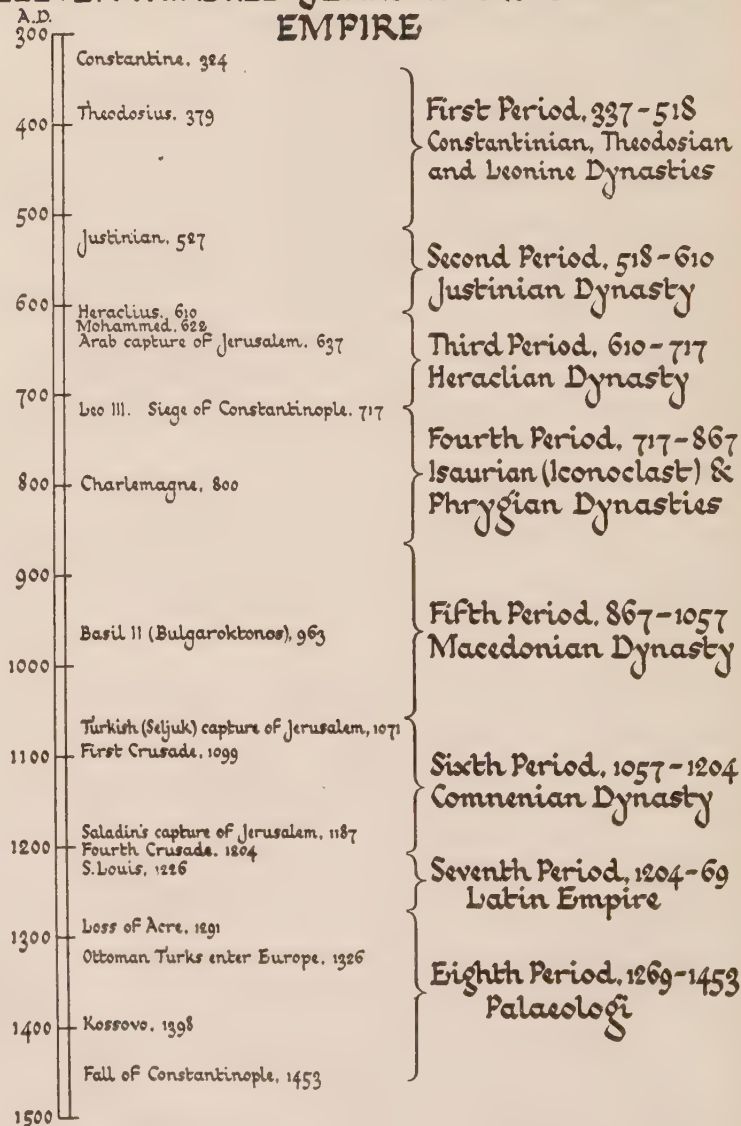
them to very different circumstances. Their strange mastery (as it seemed) of an element little understood by the nomad barbarians of central Europe enabled them to penetrate the Roman world from many sides. Their strong character enabled them to affect it more deeply than was warranted by their actual numbers. And though they have left comparatively few other traces upon the languages of Europe, Norman place-names can be found wherever they went. For instance, Grimsby, Burnthwaite, Harroby, Thoresby, Guttersby, and Hacconby in England were named after the Viking warriors Grim, Biörn, Harold, Thor, Guddar, and Haco: and exactly the same names reappear in the villages of Grimonville, Borneville, Heronville, Tourville, Godarville, and Haconville (or Hacqueville), in Normandy. Nor is the likeness confined to place-names. An English traveller in Normandy finds something familiar in the character of the people, a touch of Viking blood that makes them his kin.

IV

Looking back on medieval France as a whole, we may fairly claim that the geographical conditions under which its history developed were distinctly favourable to the transition from a number of half-independent feudal baronies into a centralized monarchy. The normal flatness of the country at one time, it has been suggested, encouraged the building of feudal castles at strategic points, and the use of feudal cavalry, and at another facilitated the spread of central control. The absence of natural barriers which enabled the Frankish chieftains in the seventh and eighth centuries to overrun France from north to west, from west to

south, and from south to east, enabled the French
kings to unify the feudal estates in the same rotation:
first the feudal fiefs of the north, from their strategic
centre at Paris and the Île de France, then the western
and south-western territories wrested from England,
then the southern lands annexed as the result of the
Albigensian 'crusade', then the provinces east of the
Rhone, and finally the Duchy and (as late as the
17th century) the County of Burgundy. It was not an
accident that the growth of the French nation followed
the same course as the spread of the Frankish tribes.
There is an underlying unity throughout the whole of
this history: and it is geographical.

ELEVEN HUNDRED YEARS of the EASTERN EMPIRE

A.D.

Date	Event	Period
300		
	Constantine, 324	
400	Theodosius, 379	First Period, 337-518 Constantinian, Theodosian and Leonine Dynasties
500		
	Justinian, 527	Second Period, 518-610 Justinian Dynasty
600	Heraclius, 610 Mohammed, 622 Arab capture of Jerusalem, 637	Third Period, 610-717 Heraclian Dynasty
700	Leo III. Siege of Constantinople, 717	Fourth Period, 717-867 Isaurian (Iconoclast) & Phrygian Dynasties
800	Charlemagne, 800	
900		Fifth Period, 867-1057 Macedonian Dynasty
	Basil II (Bulgaroktonos), 963	
1000		
	Turkish (Seljuk) capture of Jerusalem, 1071 First Crusade, 1099	
1100		Sixth Period, 1057-1204 Comnenian Dynasty
1200	Saladin's capture of Jerusalem, 1187 Fourth Crusade, 1204 S. Louis, 1226	Seventh Period, 1204-69 Latin Empire
1300	Loss of Acre, 1291 Ottoman Turks enter Europe, 1326	Eighth Period, 1269-1453 Palaeologi
1400	Kossovo, 1398	
	Fall of Constantinople, 1453	
1500		

IV. THE EASTERN EMPIRE AND THE CRUSADES

WHILST in France and Germany an attempt was being made to fuse together tribal institutions and the traditions of Rome; whilst in the one country feudalism was turning into absolute monarchy, and in the other into a loose federation of small states, the stage was being prepared elsewhere for a new development, which would transform the medieval into the modern world. Medieval Europe, the scene of this double experiment, was a very limited area, not much larger than the Carolingian Empire; and its safety depended upon two barriers—at the eastern end that of the Carpathians, at the western end that of the Pyrenees. Beyond these two barriers lay two bridges—one from Europe to Africa, and the other from Europe to Asia—Spain and the Balkan Peninsula. The history and geography of these two countries curiously balance one another. Both are mountainous peninsulas, with their chief river systems running away from the Mediterranean. Both had remained provincial under Roman rule, and Roman under the barbarian invasions. If Mohammed had appeared before Theodoric, Constantinople might have been built in the west instead of in the east. Founded to hold off the Goths, it lived to throw back the Turks. In the west, when Islam attacked, Rome was dead, and Spain had to fight its own battle against the Moors. Europe was twice saved within a few years by the victory of the Franks at Poitiers (732), and by the victory of the Byzantines at Constantinople (718). This double defence was followed by a double offensive—the recon-

quest of Spain from the Moors, and the reconquest of
Syria and Palestine from the Saracens. The latter is
always reckoned a Crusade: the former should be too:
they are both parts of a single event.

But the interest of the extreme east and west of
Europe during the Middle Ages does not lie merely in
the Crusades, but in that to which the Crusades gave
birth—a commercial revolution, and the creation of
a middle class: for it was this that provided most of the
stimulus and material for the Renaissance and the
Reformation.

I

When Constantine founded the new capital of the
Roman Empire, he chose Byzantium rather than Nish,
or Nicomedia, or Troy (all of which were considered),
because of its convenience both for the military defence
of the lower Danube, and for policing the trade-routes
upon which the life of the Empire depended. It needs
no knowledge of geography to see what a splendid site he
chose (*v.* Map on p. 11), whether for the immediate needs
of defence, or for controlling the lands to east and west,
and the seas to north and south, of that nucleus of the
Nearer East. Safe behind their impregnable walls, the
emperors of the fifth and sixth centuries drove off the
barbarians who overran the Western Empire: in the
seventh century they saved Europe from the Moham-
medan Arabs, in the eighth and ninth they kept alive
learning, the arts of peace, and the science of war: and
in the eleventh, though decadent, they could still pro-
vide a stimulus and starting-point for the Crusade
against the Turks.

Unless one went direct by sea—and the Roman tradi-

tion was as strongly against voyaging in the winter as the Greek tradition was against sailing out of sight of land—every route to Syria must pass within reach of Constantinople. Constantinople was the rendezvous of the three expeditions which composed the First Crusade. One marched by the old Roman road from Mainz to Ratisbon, Vienna, Belgrad, Sofia, and Adrianople. This is a natural route, which has been of immense importance in European history, from the time when it was first explored by Roman legionaries to the time when it was first traversed by the Paris–Constantinople express. Through Belgrad the nomad barbarians invaded Europe, the Turks overran Hungary, and by the same route they were driven out again. Through Belgrad Austria has tried to reach the Aegean, and round this route have revolved all the wars and intrigues of the Balkan states. The second crusading army marched by another old Roman road from Lyon across the Alps to Turin, Genoa, Rome, and Bari or Brindisi; thence by ship to Durazzo, and by the Via Egnatia to Salonica and the Bosporus. The third army varied this route by crossing the Alps from Geneva to Milan, rounding the head of the Adriatic, and then marching down Dalmatia to Durazzo—a route made barely practicable by Roman coast-roads. The Second and Third Crusades followed the Danube valley route, though the Third also included an expedition by sea; and the Fourth reached Constantinople by coasting down the Adriatic, and round Greece.

Looking at the Crusades as a whole, one is struck by the Roman-ness of them. They originate in lands that had been under Roman rule. They move by Roman routes. The area which they cover is almost exactly

that of the old Roman world (*v*. Map on p. 12). They
are in fact the medieval counterpart of the far eastern
wars of the Roman Republic and Empire. Tancred and
Bohemund are the successors of Pompey and Titus.
And the same geographical factors control both move-
ments—the trend of the mountain ranges—Alps, Bal-
kans, and Carpathians—from north-west to south-east;
the through routes designed by nature down the Danube
valley, through the Balkan passes, and along the
Adriatic shore; and the convergence of land and sea
roads on Constantinople.

The geography of Asia Minor falls outside our sub-
ject; but it is important, for the history of the Crusades,
to realize that it was on the east side of the Bosporus
that the Eastern Emperors possessed a country capable
(as Turkey in Europe has never been) of centralized
government based on a dominating central plateau,
with a people more homogeneous than could be found
in the Balkans, and more amenable to taxation and
military service. It was the loss of Asia Minor, rather
than of Syria, that induced the Emperor to call in the
Crusaders; and his anxiety to recover control of his
own lands, rather than to rescue the Holy Sites from
the infidel, that caused so much trouble between him
and his allies. But whilst Constantinople provided a
base of operations, and Asia Minor a route to the Holy
land, it was the length of their communications, and
the trackless uplands of Anatolia (where even modern
engineers find it difficult to maintain a railway), that
contributed largely to the failure of the Crusaders.

The immediate political fruits of the Crusades were
the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Latin Em-
pire of Constantinople. Both failed primarily because

they reproduced in an aggravated form the vices of western feudalism, and the quarrels between the State and the Church. But in both cases geography was a contributory cause. In Syria the Christian states occupied a narrow coast-line stretching from the Euphrates to the gulf of Akaba, with a long desert frontier, open to Arab raiders, on the one side, and a long inhospitable sea-shore, with a few bad harbours, on the other. They had been able to establish themselves here during a temporary quarrel between their northern enemies at Bagdad and their southern enemies at Cairo. When these united again, the Christians were crushed between them. In the Balkan peninsula geographical conditions had always stood in the way of unity of government. Nature had designed the country for small states. When the crusading barons had settled down, the old Greek divisions reappeared in the feudal states of Thessalonica, Athens, and the Morea. Soon rival emperors rose up at Nicaea, Trebizond, and Thessalonica. It needed only a resolute general to sweep the whole structure away. The Latin Kingdom had lasted nearly a century: the Latin Empire disappeared in a little over fifty years.

II

Meanwhile another Crusade was being conducted, on different lines, and to a different conclusion, at the western end of the civilized world. Just 300 years after the ‘barbarians’ had invaded Spain from the north (A.D. 411), it was overrun again by the ‘Moors’ from the south (A.D. 711). They were led across the straits from north Africa by one Tarik, who gave his name to his landing-place at Gibraltar (Gebel-al-

Tarik, 'Tarik's hill'). Within a single generation they had mastered the whole country, invaded France, and been turned back by Charles Martel at Poitiers (732). There followed 500 years' gradual reconquest of the peninsula, up to the decisive victory at Las Navas de Tolosa (1212); 250 years later the country was at last united under the rule of Ferdinand and Isabella; and the Crusade ended in the conquest of Granada, the final refuge of the Moors, in 1492.

Historians are agreed that this 800 years' struggle left marks upon the Spanish national character, and upon the institutions of the country, which have never been effaced. It made the people cruel and fanatical. It turned them from the arts of peace to the science of war. It led them to despise the agriculture and industries in which their enemies excelled, and to prefer Catholic miracles and romances to the science and philosophy of the infidel. Their divisions made them a prey to an absolute monarchy, and their ignorance a prey to an infallible priesthood. They learned, during their long isolation from Europe, to hate what other nations loved, and to love what other nations hated.

What has the geography of Spain to do with this strange development? How far can it explain the isolation of the country, its rapid conquest and slow reconquest, its provincialism, the backwardness of its industry and agriculture, the character of its people?

First, as to the isolation of the country: It is likely that at different prehistoric times Spain was (1) an island, separated from France by a sea joining the Gulf of Lions to the Bay of Biscay, and (2) a peninsula of Africa, joined to Morocco by a land-bridge across the Straits of Gibraltar. It is certain that during the whole

historical period it has been cut off from the rest of Europe by a mountain barrier more impassable than the Alps, whilst its structure and climate are more like those of north Africa. The high bare plateau that constitutes the mass of the peninsula, the rocky defiles through which its (geologically speaking) young rivers cut their way to the western sea, the yellow glare of sunlight that has found its way into Spanish pictures, and the cool fountains and gardens lying behind the walled and shuttered streets, recall the 'wadis', the sands, and the oases of the Sahara. The fauna and flora of Spain are half African; so are the rainfall and the summer temperature of the central and south-eastern parts of the peninsula. This was at least one reason why the Moors were attracted across the Straits of Gibraltar, and were able to reproduce on the hill-sides of Granada the terrace gardens of south-western Arabia. And though the prehistoric land-bridge had long disappeared, the easy comings and goings of Vandals, Moors, and (after the 15th century) Spaniards themselves across the Straits of Gibraltar showed how naturally Spain looks southwards rather than northwards for expansion and empire. The isolation of the country has, of course, other causes. But certainly one of them is geographical (v. Map H).

It would be easy to guess, from the way in which the main mountain ranges and rivers of the peninsula run across it from east to west, that Spain has always been a difficult country to conquer from the north or south. The French have always found it so; the classical instance is, of course, the Peninsular War. The Romans did not have this difficulty, because they came from the north-east; nor the Allies in the War of Spanish

Succession, because they marched on Madrid from Barcelona, along the route of the modern railway; nor Wellington, because he made Lisbon his base, and moved up instead of across the river valleys. If the Moors, coming from the south, were able to overrun the country in a few years, the reasons should be sought, not in geography, but in politics—in the quarrels and intrigues of the Gothic chieftains who opposed them. If the Spaniards took nearly as many centuries to drive the invaders out of the country as the invaders had taken years to overrun it, that again, though more in accordance with geography, was due very largely to the disunity of the attack, and the tendency of each district, as soon as the Moors were driven out, to be content with its own security.

This provincialism was itself partly due to geographical conditions. The course of the Spanish rivers, and the run of the mountain ranges, cut up the country into eight well-defined areas: the highlands of Galicia and Asturias, the upper Douro basin, the valley of the Ebro, the central tableland, the south-east coast, the valley of the Guadalquivir, the Granada district, and Portugal. The first of these was the one part of the peninsula that the Moors never conquered, and the base from which their own expulsion began. The others were successively reconquered, from north to south, and became the states of Leon, Aragon, Old and New Castile, Valencia and Murcia, Andalusia, Granada, and the independent state of Portugal. As each area freed itself from the invader, and drove him over the hills into the next, it tended to settle down under the local rule that had won it liberty, to follow the methods of life prescribed by its special climate and configuration,
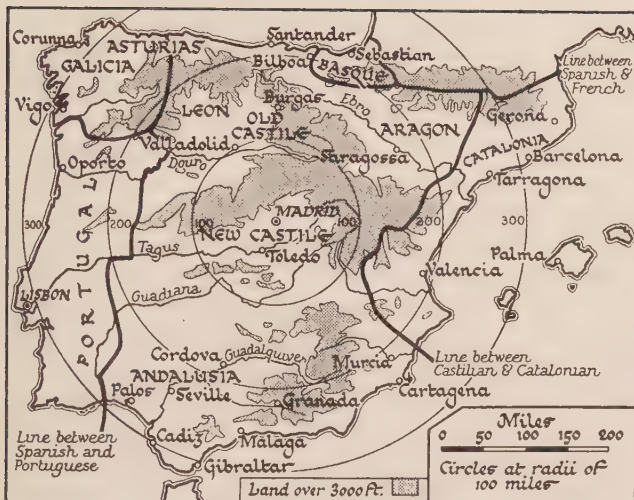
MAP H. SPAIN

Main features

  1. Notice that the contour-line taken to represent mountains
is 3,000 ft. in this map as against 1,200 ft. in France, Germany,
and Russia.   If 1,200 ft. had been taken, almost the whole
country would have been included. Consider the effect of this
configuration on agriculture, communications, provincialism,
and trade.

  2. Spain African rather than European in climate, flora,
fauna, &c.; cut off from Europe by the Pyrenees. Consider the
historical effects of this isolation.

  3. The river-system of Spain compared with that of France—
Douro and Tagus, with Seine and Loire, Guadalquivir with
Garonne, Ebro with Rhone. The distribution of the coast-lands.
Are there geographical reasons for the separation of Spain and
Portugal?

  4. The central position of Madrid. Compare with Paris, or
Moscow. Its influence on Spanish history.

to pride itself on its own little history, and its own tradi-
tional outlook, and to regard with suspicion its neigh-
bours across the frontier, which had so recently been
the dividing line between Christian and Infidel. This
regionalism rooted in geography, and, in the absence
of a centralized road-system, nurtured by differences
of language and institutions, has embarrassed every
attempt at centralized government in Las Españas
('the Spains'), as it was called, from the time of Fer-
dinand and Isabella to the present day. It has also
embarrassed attempts to conquer the country, as when,
in the War of Spanish Succession, Castile backed a
French candidate for the throne, and Aragon an
Austrian.

Portugal, except during two short periods of forcible
annexation, has always stood apart from the history of
the rest of the peninsula. At first sight this fact seems
to contradict geography. Both the rivers and the
mountain ranges which determine Spanish geography
run from east to west right across the frontier between
Spain and Portugal. The whole central plateau slopes
down from the eastern scarp towards the western sea-
coast. How is it that this coast-land, and the lower part
of the river valleys, have been able to maintain a
separate existence, politically and economically? It is
not simply that the Suebian and Alan ancestors of the
Portuguese were driven into the west by the Goths, and
have maintained their own language, like the Welsh;
or that the Spanish kings, with the exception of Philip II,
have been too feeble to conquer them. Racial differ-
ences and political independence have been backed by
geography. The rivers that seem to unite the central
plateau with the west coast do not really do so, because

during the whole of their upper courses they are un-navigable. Their upper valleys, too, are cut off from their lower by a belt of mountainous and almost desert country. Towards the west, no doubt, the mountain ranges break up, and allow communications from north to south; but farther eastwards this is almost impossible. Portugal has thus developed, not as the coast-plain of the interior, the source and outlet of its exploitation, but as a detached and self-centred country. Its closest rival in the early sixteenth century was the Netherlands. The rapid decline of the one, and the rapid advance of the other, were largely due just to the difference between their geographical backgrounds. Behind Portugal was a roadless and (so far as concerned navigation) a riverless country, with little agriculture and no trade. Behind the Netherlands was the German plain, the highway of the Rhine, the old trade-route from the Rhone valley to the English Channel, and the new trade-route from the Adriatic to the North Sea. The nearest analogy to Portugal is not the Netherlands but Wales—Wales of the pre-coal days, before Telford's road to Holyhead, and the modern tourist traffic.

The backwardness of Spain in agriculture, in industry, in commerce—can that be explained by geography? Great areas of the country are very unfertile, with no depth of soil, and a climate that is too hot in summer, too cold in winter, and too dry all the year round. But there are also, in the river valleys, and along the eastern coast, natural hot-houses and market-gardens. Is it really Nature, or is it national lack of enterprise, and the ' dead hand ' of the Church and the landlord, that retard progress. Spain has some of the

richest mineral deposits in Europe; but they are largely exploited by foreigners. Industry is handicapped by the lack of internal communications; but Spain had, in Roman times, as good a road-system as France. Commerce is difficult in a country whose rivers are unnavigable, whose roads have to be carried over mountain ranges, and whose few harbours are backed by almost inaccessible uplands. But such difficulties exist to be overcome, and other nations have overcome them. In short, there seems to be no sufficient reason in geography why a country which under the Roman and Moorish régimes was the scene of agriculture and industry as well as of learning and art, should have ceased to be so under the Hapsburgs and Bourbons: we are forced to look, for a great part of the explanation, to the national character, to the economic effects of colonial empire (especially of the influx of silver and gold from America in the 16th century), to the rejection of everything for which the Moors stood—their art, their learning, and their industry—to bad government, and to the influence of the Church.

These peculiar disabilities have given to Spanish history a more distinct and consistent character than that of any other European country. The same genius for a fanatical gesture, the same incapacity for plodding success, appear throughout. Jewish financiers or Jesuit priests are expelled from the country with the same ruthlessness as Moorish artisans. Foreign invaders, handicapped by the difficulty of reaching Madrid either by the west end of the Pyrenees (the most practicable route from France), or from Catalonia, fared equally ill in the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth. Baylen was as fatal as Almanza. 'War in Spain', writes

Macaulay, 'has, from the days of the Romans, had a character of its own; it is a fire which cannot be raked out; it burns fiercely under the embers; and, long after it has to all seeming been extinguished, bursts forth more violently than ever.'[1] The 150 years of predominance under Ferdinand and his immediate successors, the temporary revival under Elizabeth Farnese and Alberoni, the attempted reforms of Carlos III, have all ended in a decline, which seems to belong to the nature of the Spanish people and the Spanish land.

III

In the Middle Ages trade followed the Cross. Amongst the many results of the Crusades none was more significant than the creation of new trade-routes, and of a new trading class. During the earlier medieval times the trade of Europe had travelled, roughly speaking, along the sides of a square whose corners were Constantinople, Marseilles, London, and Danzig; and of this commercial system Constantinople was the bank, the warehouse, and the exchange. Its supremacy survived the Arab conquest of the Levant, and Byzantine merchants soon established themselves at Bagdad, where they purchased Oriental flags and carpets for their noble customers, or damask (Damascus) altar-hangings for the churches of Christendom. But this commerce could not survive the double blow of the Seljuk Turks from the east and of the Fourth Crusade from the west, the one closing the trade-routes of Asia Minor, and the other diverting those of the Levant. Venice took over the sea-trade of Constantinople, and became the distributing point of eastern goods for the
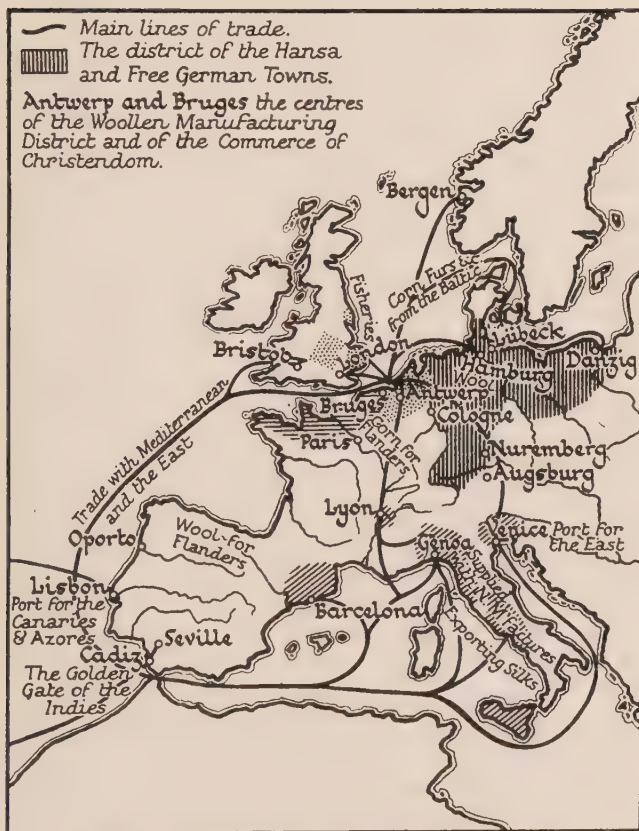
[1] Essay on 'The War of Spanish Succession'.

whole of Europe. The result was a regrouping of
political and social life along routes, and round centres,
whose position was determined largely by geography:
for, though the aim of commerce is to reach the
nearest or the most profitable market, the best way of
doing so depends upon 'the lie of the land' (*v.* Map I).

The district which benefited first, and most directly,
by the Venetian trade was Lombardy—the wide plain,
sown with walled cities, that lay between the Adriatic
and the passes over the Alps. Ever since Roman times
certain passes had been in fairly constant use, and the
cities from which travellers started for them had grown
in political and commercial importance. From Turin
one could travel either by the Mont Genèvre (Alpis
Cottia), the Little St. Bernard (Alpis Graja), or the
Great St. Bernard (Alpis Poenina), to the Rhone valley:
from Milan by the St. Bernardino, Splügen, Septimer,
or Julier to Chur, and the upper Rhine: and from
Verona by the Brenner (Vallis Tridentina) to Inns-
bruck and the Danube.

One effect of the Crusades was greatly to increase
the traffic over the Alpine passes, and particularly those
nearest to Venice. As the pressure became greater,
and some of the old passes were closed (e.g. the Bishop
of Chur in 1359 closed all those in the Grisons district
to stop smuggling, and to make the collection of tolls
easier), new routes came into use. The opening of the
St. Gothard, thanks to the erection of a bridge at a
difficult point on the Swiss side at the beginning of
the fourteenth century, concentrated traffic on the
Rhine valley, and had important consequences upon
the whole development of western Germany.

In the Middle Ages the most popular passes were

Main lines of trade.
The district of the Hansa and Free German Towns.
Antwerp and Bruges the centres of the Woollen Manufacturing District and of the Commerce of Christendom.

Bergen
Corn, Furs &c. from the Baltic
Fisheries
Bristol
London
Lübeck
Hamburg
Danzig
Bruges
Antwerp
Wool
Cologne
Paris
Corn for Flanders
Nuremberg
Augsburg
Lyon
Trade with Mediterranean and the East
Oporto
Wool for Flanders
Genoa
Venice Port for the East
Supplying Manufactures with Raw Materials
Lisbon Port for the Canaries & Azores
Seville
Cadiz The Golden Gate of the Indies
Barcelona
Exporting Silks

MAP I. MANUFACTURING DISTRICTS

Dotted areas. Supplied with wool from England, Spain, and Hesse, and corn from France and the ports on the Baltic—exporting woollen goods all over Christendom.

Horizontal shading. In close connexion with the woollen trade.

Diagonal shading. In Italy, Sicily, Catalonia, Lyon, &c. These districts supplied with woollen goods from the north by sea and by the overland commerce through Germany to Venice.

the Great St. Bernard from Italy to north-western Europe, and the Mont Cenis to France, whilst the Brenner was the usual route by which the emperors travelled to Lombardy and Rome. Henry IV went by the Mont Cenis to Canossa only because the eastern passes were in the hands of his German enemies. The French invasions of Italy in the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries were conducted by the western passes: Francis I in 1515 crossed by the Argentière. It was the position of the dukes of Savoy, as guardians of these western passes, that enabled them to build up an independent power by putting a price upon their services, and playing off their French against their Austrian clients. From the dukedom of Savoy came the kingdom of Sardinia, and from the kingdom of Sardinia the first sovereign of united Italy.

It was the north Italian cities, then, that benefited first, and most obviously, by the transference of the Eastern trade from Byzantine to Venetian hands: and there can be no need to insist upon the important bearing which this fact had upon the Renaissance of Italian art and Italian learning, or upon the growth of political liberalism in such self-governing communities as Florence and Venice. But the influence of the new trade-routes was felt no less on the north side of the Alps. Germany, which had been isolated by the commercial system of the early Middle Ages, was now brought into civilization by new routes from south to north. Venetian goods crossed the Brenner to Augsburg, and were distributed down the Rhine and Danube. In south Germany it is possible to distinguish three industrial and commercial zones which benefited much by the Crusades. The first was that of Innsbruck and

Constance, whose linen factories supplied the Rhone valley, Spain, western Germany, and the Netherlands. The second was that of the Danube valley, where the old Roman movement up and down stream (revived by the Crusades) was now replaced by a movement from south to north, and the Ratisbon-Vienna route declined in importance in proportion as traffic was concentrated on the Augsburg-Ulm route to the Rhine, and the direct Semmering Pass route from the Adriatic to Vienna. The third zone was the district of the Main and the middle Rhine, the commercial inlets of which were Bâle in the south (the junction of Alpine routes by the upper Rhine and Rhone valleys), Nuremberg (already a toy factory) and Erfurt in the east, and Strasbourg, the door of Alsace, in the west; and whose outlet was Cologne. In all these districts there was, in the course of the thirteenth century, a noteworthy growth of trade and manufactures, an increasing demand for and supply of things that made life more comfortable, a rise in the wealth and social position of the mercantile classes, and a greater tendency to rebel against the 'dead hand' of lay and ecclesiastical authority.

Two other districts must be mentioned as among those that benefited directly by the changed trade-routes of the thirteenth century. The markets of Champagne, where fairs went on the whole year round, had long been a favourite meeting-place for merchants from the Rhone (travelling along the old Roman route), and from the middle Rhine. Troyes, Bar, and other towns made use of their political neutrality (for they stood between France and Germany, and were exempt from the wars that endangered their neighbours) to become an important centre of banking and exchange:

and this lasted until their privileges were taken away by
the jealousy of the French kings, and their monopoly of
the Netherlands traffic by the development of sea-borne
trade in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Balanc-
ing this commercial area, on the other side of the lower
Rhine, was the great league of trading cities called the
Hansa, which was founded by the German conquest
and colonization of Slavland, and fed by the products
of the Baltic area—corn, timber, and dried fish. The
members of this loose but powerful federation, which
included places so far apart as Bruges and Novgorod,
Bergen and Frankfurt-on-Oder, enjoyed a monopoly
of the carrying trade between the Netherlands and the
Baltic, and controlled all the waterways of northern
Germany, until the geographical discoveries of the
fifteenth century, the disappearance of the herring-
shoals from the Scanian coast (in 1425), and finally the
Thirty Years' War, transferred their business to Dutch
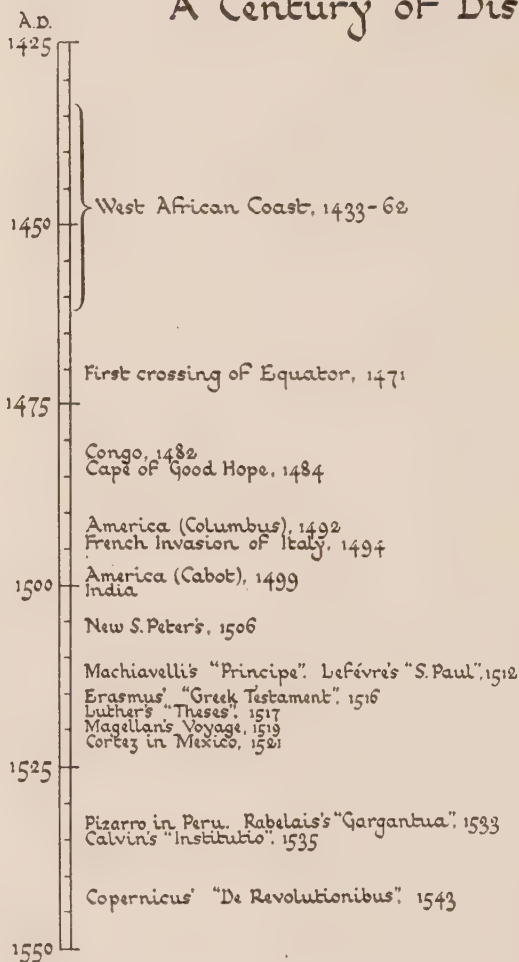and English hands.

IV

The geography of the medieval trade-routes is worth
studying not only for its own sake, but also for the sake
of its bearing on history. The economic development
of the countries served by these routes was closely
connected with their political life and destinies. Every
state, we have said, is a bit of humanity and a bit of
land: but none is self-contained: each is influenced by
its neighbours, most of all by those which belong to
the same trade-route or trade-group. Thus relation-
ships that begin in physical likeness may end in political
union, or a common language and culture. Roads and
rivers become channels of intellectual and religious

influences. When the Renaissance and the Reformation came into Germany they came across the Alpine passes and down the Rhine. They travelled with the merchants, and put up at the inns. They stayed in the great commercial cities and at the university towns, where travelling scholars taught and learnt. Thus the Crusades, the great adventure of the Age of Faith, passed into the Renaissance, the greater adventure of the Age of Doubt; and the link between them was a common share in humanity and in land.

THE RENAISSANCE
A Century of Discoveries

A.D.

1425

West African Coast, 1433–62

1450

First crossing of Equator, 1471

1475

Congo, 1482
Cape of Good Hope, 1484

America (Columbus), 1492
French Invasion of Italy, 1494
America (Cabot), 1499
India

1500

New S. Peter's, 1506

Machiavelli's "Principe". Lefévre's "S. Paul", 1512
Erasmus' "Greek Testament", 1516
Luther's "Theses", 1517
Magellan's Voyage, 1519
Cortez in Mexico, 1521

1525

Pizarro in Peru. Rabelais's "Gargantua", 1533
Calvin's "Institutio", 1535

Copernicus' "De Revolutionibus", 1543

1550

V. THE RENAISSANCE AND ITALY

IF there is any moment in history when geography cannot be ignored, it is the latter half of the fifteenth century. The geographical discoveries of this period were even more an effect than a cause of the Renaissance; but they reacted in all kinds of ways upon the intellectual, social, and political ideas of the time.

From the point of view of historical geography, the questions that have to be asked group themselves as follows. First, what was the character and extent of the new discoveries? Secondly, how did they affect the medieval trade routes and trade-centres? Thirdly, what were the political results of such geographical and economic changes?

I

The actual area of sea and land opened up during the last fifty years of the fifteenth century was about as large as that discovered during the preceding nine centuries, and not much smaller than the whole of the civilized world of Roman times. But this was not all. The discoveries of the Middle Ages had been made almost entirely in the unprofitable regions of the north and north-west: those of the sixteenth century were made in the south and south-west, in countries rich with spoil. No doubt the Crusades, and the advance of the Mongol power, had led to the far eastern journeys of Carpini, Rubruquis, and the Polos during the thirteenth century: but these had been isolated adventures with no permanent results. Where one man had travelled in the thirteenth century, fifty travelled in the fifteenth; opened up routes that were safe from interference by

anything save the forces of nature; and were followed
by a growing crowd of merchants and missionaries,
who took possession of the newly discovered lands in
the name of their king and of their church. Again, the
discovery of America (that is, of a western route to the
east) had effects of an indirect kind out of all proportion
to the direct profits drawn from the new continent.
Economically, it was not until the seventeenth century,
when its colonization made it an exporting as well as an
importing country, that America became really signifi-
cant: but in the sixteenth century it was already an in-
spiration to thinkers in search of political and religious
freedom. It was from the French travel-stories of the
seventeenth century, as well as from the English Utopias
of the same period, that there sprang the 'philosophy'
of the eighteenth century, which gave birth to the
French Revolution. 'Robinson Crusoe' had French
models; Jesuits and Huguenots planned colonial re-
publics; and theologians disputed as to what light
was thrown on the Papal claims by the ancient religion
of the Incas, or on the doctrine of Original Sin by
the absence of a sense of shame among the natives of
the New World.

II

A profound change was brought about in the trade-
routes of Europe by the geographical discoveries of the
sixteenth century. Hitherto all commerce between the
East and the West, whether in Greek, Roman, Byzan-
tine, or Venetian vessels, had passed up and down the
Mediterranean. Now, almost suddenly, the old routes
were deserted, and new channels of trade opened up
that avoided the Mediterranean altogether. Portugal

began it: Portugal, a country marked out by its geography as a maritime state, and by its history as a crusading power. The African voyages, inspired by Prince Henry the Navigator in the middle of the fifteenth century, began as Crusades and ended as commercial speculations. When, in 1498, Vasco da Gama at last reached Calicut, two results followed that were felt within a few years all over the Mediterranean countries: the old trade-routes from east to west, latterly more and more in Saracen hands, were cut off at their source; and a new route, safe from interference by the Turks, was substituted for them. The capture of Goa, Malacca, and Ormuz had, indeed, much more than economic importance; for it undermined the Turkish military power at the very moment of its greatest threat to the security of Europe. But the immediate effect was to give Portugal a monopoly of Eastern trade, and to swell the profits of the Lisbon merchants. If the country was unable to keep its monopoly, and if the merchants of England, Holland, and Germany secured an increasing share of the spoil, it was not for geographical reasons so much as for political: Portugal had neither the population nor the military power to guard what it had made from the first an armed monopoly. Its annexation by Spain in 1580 advertised its impotence, and encouraged England and Holland to partition its empire.

The country that seemed to be marked out both by its geographical position and by its newly won political unity to take the lead in colonial enterprise was Spain. Nature had, indeed, allowed it only one outlet to the Atlantic—the valley of the Guadalquivir; and until the silting up of this river at the end of the sixteenth century

left it with only one first-rate harbour, Cadiz, and the little port of Palos, from which Columbus set out in 1492, and to which Cortes returned in 1528, Seville monopolized the western as Lisbon monopolized the eastern trade-routes. Nevertheless, if Spain, like Portugal, failed to keep what it had won, the reasons were not primarily geographical, but political and economic. Though it had few natural facilities to encourage colonial enterprise, and no over-population to necessitate it, the country threw immense energy into the conquest of the New World. But the Conquistadors were impelled partly by the thirst for precious metals, and partly by the thirst for souls; and these incongruous motives became the ruin of their country. For the economic development of the colonies was sacrificed to the exploitation of their gold and silver mines, and to the dumping of Spanish goods on their shores; whilst the wealth so won was spent, not on stimulating the commercial life of the mother country, but in Catholic crusades against the Moors and Protestants, its wealthiest and most industrious subjects.

Whilst the tide of trade flowed on the Atlantic coast, it ebbed in the Mediterranean. The second half of the fifteenth century began with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, and ended with the Portuguese seizure of the sources of Turkish wealth in the far east. The effect was soon felt at Venice, which (as its trade fell off) began to improve its treatment of foreign merchants, to rouse the Indian princes against Portugal, and to dream of a Suez Canal. Genoa, Leghorn, and Barcelona shared the Venetian decline. The traffic over the Alpine passes, and up the Danube valley, rapidly diminished. German merchants opened offices

at Seville and Lisbon, and fitted out ships for the West Indies. Lyon became a meeting-point for German, Italian, and Spanish trade, and the centre of an international exchange, until ruined by the French Wars of Religion, and by the exactions of the French kings. Further north, as Lisbon superseded Venice, so Antwerp took the place of Bruges, which was cut off from the sea by the silting up of the Swin, and became the resort of German merchants from the Hansa towns, trading in pepper and English cloth. The rise of Antwerp gave a fresh direction to the trade of the Rhine valley and western Germany: Bâle and Strasbourg, which depended on the trans-Alpine commerce, declined; whilst Frankfurt, Leipzig, and the market towns of central Germany were brought into closer touch with the Netherlands. Spain should have been the principal gainer by this change—Spain, which now controlled both the American sources of the new wealth, and its chief inlets into Europe, the ports of the Spanish Netherlands. But Philip II would sooner reign over poor Catholics than wealthy heretics: and his policy in the Netherlands ended in the commercial decay of the southern states, in the transference of trade from Antwerp to Amsterdam, and in the rapid rise of the Protestant United Provinces to the position of warehouse, bank, and exchange for the whole of north-western Europe.

III

What, now, were the political results of these geographical and economic changes?

North Italy had been the first part of Europe to gain by the Crusades: it was also the first to lose by the
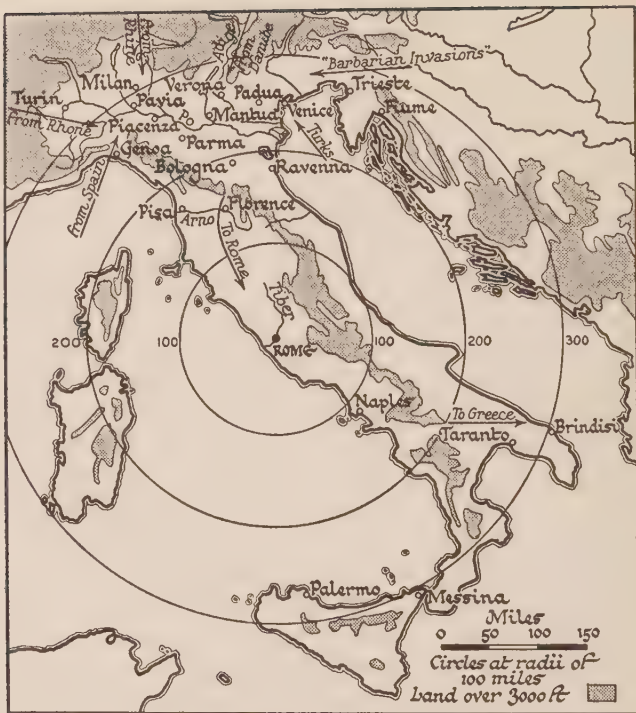
MAP K. ITALY

Main features

1. Disunity of an awkwardly shaped country dissected by a mountain-range (notice that contour is at 3,000 ft., as in Spain), and with strong varieties of configuration and climate. The bearing of this on the late date of Italian political unity.

2. Lombardy as ' the cockpit of Southern Europe '. Its inlets by land through the Alpine passes, and by sea through Venice and Genoa. The influence of these openings on its peculiar history.

3. Florence the half-way house to Rome, and the geographical isolation of Tuscany.

4. The position of Rome not central, unless Italy becomes an empire.

5. Lack of natural harbours, esp. on the E. coast; and of wide coast-lands. Effect of this on Italian development.

maritime discoveries. Its cities lost their monopoly of Eastern trade. Their wealth declined. Political control fell into the hands of tyrants, who called in foreign powers to help them against their rivals. This was the situation which led, at the end of the fifteenth century, to the French invasions of Italy (*v*. Map K).

Italy invited invasion. Its pleasant climate and natural resources, which had attracted the 'barbarians' in the fifth century, were still attractive to Frenchmen in the fifteenth. The opportunities for loot were even greater. The barrier of the Alps, though higher and more continuous at the western end of the Lombard plain than at the eastern, and though providing no such open door as the Brenner Pass, was at any rate much easier to approach and to scale from the French side than from the Italian, and several roads converged from passes at the head of the Isère and Durance valleys upon the upper course of the Po, and the capital of Piedmont, Turin. Progress farther south depended upon the crossing of the Apennines from Bologna to Florence, and was a problem for diplomats rather than for engineers: the keys to the pass were in the pockets of Florentine statesmen. What the French found was that it did not require great generalship to take an army into Italy, but that it needed all their skill to get it out again. Without command of the sea they could never feel easy about their long line of communications. Any rising behind them endangered their retreat. Both Charles VIII and Louis XII were forced to recall their victorious armies owing to confederations of hostile states in their rear. If the states could have sunk their jealousies a little sooner, it seems likely that the natural obstacles to invasion could have been

rendered impassable, and that the whole history of the country might have been different. For the political result of these wars was to postpone the unity of Italy for 350 years.

And yet few countries on the map of Europe seem more marked out for political independence. 'Italy is the only land', wrote Mazzini, 'that has twice uttered the great word of unification to the disjointed nations'—once from the throne of the Caesars, and once from the chair of the Popes. When it did so for the third time, in the nineteenth century, it was Mazzini who claimed that nature itself was on the side of national unity.

'God has stretched round you', he cried to his followers, 'sublime and indisputable boundaries; on the one side the highest mountains of Europe, the Alps; on the other the sea, the immeasurable sea. Take a map of Europe, and place one point of a pair of compasses in the north of Italy, on Parma; point the other to the mouth of the Var (near Nice), and describe a semicircle with it in the direction of the Alps; this point, which will fall, when the semicircle is complete, upon the mouth of the Isonzo, will have marked the frontier which God has given you.'[1]

Mazzini was thinking as a Lombard, and illustrating unconsciously how isolated this region is from the rest of Italy. If he had completed his circle he would have found that it did not include Rome, the geographical and historical centre of Italy, or the great islands to the west of it, which are essential to its unity. He was in fact reminding his readers, though he did not mean to do so, that within the unity which had been given to their country by the wall of the Alps and the moat of

[1] *Duties of Man* (Everyman edition), p. 53.

the sea, there were also natural encouragements to
disunity in the long partition-wall of the Apennines,
and in the marked contrasts of climate and products
between the various regions into which the southern
part of the peninsula and its attendant islands are split
up. The Romans achieved political unity in their time,
but not nationality or patriotism, by the institution of
citizenship, and by a centralized road-system. The
medieval Papacy achieved it, to a lesser degree, by
spiritual prestige, and a centralized Church-system.
In both cases the unity was that of Rome, not of **Italy.**
And as the international power of the Popes declined
and they became territorial princes, using their geo-
graphical position astride the peninsula to hold the
balance between other princes to north and south of
them, all hope of turning Italy from a church into a
nation disappeared. The wars of the sixteenth century
left the country more than ever divided. And so it
remained until the nineteenth.

Most of what was permanent in the legacy of Rome
to Italy was locked up behind the walls of the city-
states, and survived just because it had never become
a national possession. Defended by their walls and
by their rivers, the Lombard towns could watch the
barbarian invasions flow by without being forced to
combine against them. Commercial jealousies, and
the bitterness of the Guelf-Ghibelline quarrel, made
it difficult for them to unite even against the attacks of
the emperors. They would form temporary leagues, at
the bidding of the Pope, to punish the Venetians, or to
expel a French invader. But they returned, the moment
it was done, to their more congenial rivalry. Further
south, the topography of Tuscany and Umbria made

it easy, and almost inevitable, that safety and civiliza-
tion should find a home in city-states, as is apparent
to any one who has climbed the hill to Siena, or looked
out from the battlements of Perugia. But the great
services of the city-state system to literature and art
were given at a great price—that of Italian unity and
nationality. And as the old Rome of the Empire used
this system as a basis for its centralized rule, so did
the new Rome of the Papacy. It has yet to be proved
that Italy as a nation can do as much for civilization as
it did when it was 'a geographical expression'.

Meanwhile, what did France gain from these wars?
Little territorially, except an open door, that Richelieu
was to use later, to the Lombard plain; and little
economically from its attempt to capture an exhausted
market, except a stimulus to the silk industry of Lyon.
The real gainers were Austria, which had easier access
to Lombardy by the Brenner pass, and (owing to the
eastward trend of the Italian peninsula) a shorter route
thence to the south; and Spain, which had command
of the sea, and could use the Balearic islands, Sicily,
Sardinia, and Corsica, as stepping-stones across the
western Mediterranean.

France not only spent the first half of the critical
sixteenth century pursuing useless designs in Italy, but
also wasted the succeeding thirty years in the civil
wars of religion. During this period it failed to play
the part that its geographical position on the Atlantic
coast and its fine harbours warranted, either in the
new discoveries, or in the new commerce. The very
success with which Henry IV solved the problem of
religious toleration was another handicap to French
colonial enterprise, for there were no religious refugees

from France (as there were from England and Holland) to seek an asylum in America. When, under Colbert, the country did at last try to live up to its opportunities of commercial greatness, it found Holland and England already in the field, and Louis XIV's Napoleonic efforts to conquer the sea from the land were defeated by a coalition under an English King and Dutch Stadtholder in the person of William of Orange.

The chief result of the new commerce in north Germany was the creation of the 'Baltic question' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The decay of the Hanseatic League encouraged Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, and, later, Brandenburg and Russia to make a bid for the control of the Baltic, with its fisheries, its grain, its timber, its furs, and its minerals. This was one of the issues in the Thirty Years' War. Swedish predominance, won by the arms of Gustavus Adolphus, was kept under the patronage of Louis XIV from 1648 to 1709, when the Northern war ended in the victory of Russia at Poltawa, and in the Treaty of Nystadt (1721). During the rest of the eighteenth century Russia and Prussia, neither of them maritime powers, disputed the rights of Baltic trade with England and Holland. In the nineteenth century the final repercussion of the Renaissance discoveries was seen in the Prussian naval policy, and in the opening of the Kiel canal.

Southern Germany, once more reduced to its medieval isolation, watched its commerce ebb away northwards and westwards. In the Thirty Years' War the Empire attempted to assert control over the Baltic area, and failed. After the middle of the seventeenth century it became necessary to look for trade outlets to the east and south. Just at this moment the Turks

began a fresh advance on the side of Hungary. Austria, whose geographical position was as favourable to eastern as it was unfavourable to western enterprise, headed a new crusade down the Danube valley, and opened up the modern problem of the Nearer East.

Such were some of the political results of the geographical discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But these changes in the policy and territory of states were, after all, symptoms of deeper changes in the habits and outlook of their peoples. The greatest result of the new commerce was the growth of a new commercial interest and point of view. There was already a commercial class; but it shared the fixity of all medieval classes: whereas the new commercialism invaded more than one rank of society, and began that fusion of the 'bourgeoisie' with the 'noblesse' which was to accentuate the political inequalities of the eighteenth century, and to provide the raw material for the French Revolution. Nor were these the only uses of commercialism. The habit of travel and of intercourse with travellers; the education (however elementary) that trade requires; the 'savoir-faire' gained by dealings with the professional classes; and the independence that goes with earned security—all these qualities made the middle class readier than others to lead the way in political and religious progress. It was not an accident that Calvin found his converts along the trade-routes and in the commercial cities of southern France, or that Holland was the heir of the Venetian republic, or that many of the Hansa towns became centres of German Protestantism, and retained until modern times a high degree of political independence.
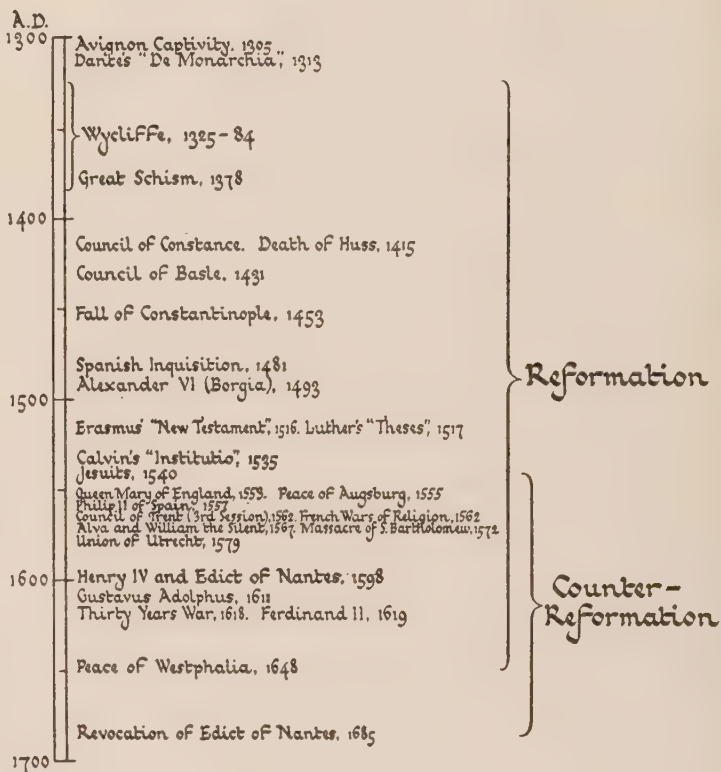
VI. THE WARS OF RELIGION

THE final course of a field-track is often settled by the first sheep which leads the flock through a gap, or by the first ploughman who walks home across the furrows. The primitive roads and tentative trade-routes of medieval Europe settled the lines upon which both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation were to run. The author of *The Protestant Revolution* prefaced his book with an industrial map of Europe; and rightly, for the Reformation was born in the great commercial districts—north Italy, the Netherlands, and the parts of France and Germany that were in close touch with the Rhine valley; and it travelled from inn to inn along the commercial highways, till it came to rest in the university towns—Bologna or Paris, Erfurt or Oxford. The Counter-Reformation spread in the same way. Loyola was Calvin's contemporary at the University of Paris. Wittenberg had its answer at Ingolstadt, Geneva was countered by Salamanca and the Sorbonne. At a time when the old currents of trade from north Italy were still running, and the new flood from the Netherlands was beginning to flow, Protestantism invaded Europe from both ends of the Rhine valley. Within a generation the Catholic reaction followed and brought about, in France, Germany, and the Netherlands, the terrible wars of the Counter-Reformation.

I

The revolt of the Netherlands was caused· by the attempt on the part of Philip II of Spain (1556–98) to impose Spanish government, Spanish orthodoxy, and Spanish taxation upon a rich, liberal, and inde-

THE WARS OF RELIGION
Four Centuries of Reformation and Counter-Reformation

A.D.

1300 — Avignon Captivity, 1305
Dante's "De Monarchia", 1313

Wycliffe, 1325-84

Great Schism, 1378

1400 —

Council of Constance. Death of Huss, 1415

Council of Basle, 1431

Fall of Constantinople, 1453

Spanish Inquisition, 1481
Alexander VI (Borgia), 1493

1500 —

Erasmus' "New Testament", 1516. Luther's "Theses", 1517

Calvin's "Institutio", 1535
Jesuits, 1540

Queen Mary of England, 1553. Peace of Augsburg, 1555
Philip II of Spain, 1557
Council of Trent (3rd Session), 1562. French Wars of Religion, 1562
Alva and William the Silent, 1567. Massacre of S. Bartholomew, 1572
Union of Utrecht, 1579

1600 — Henry IV and Edict of Nantes, 1598
Gustavus Adolphus, 1611
Thirty Years War, 1618. Ferdinand II, 1619

Peace of Westphalia, 1648

Revocation of Edict of Nantes, 1685

1700 —

} Reformation

} Counter-Reformation

pendent community. The objection which the commercial cities felt to his methods nearly lost him the whole country, when the northern and southern states united in the Pacification of Ghent (1576). But in the end the southern states returned to Spanish allegiance, and became the Spanish Netherlands; whilst the northern states broke away, and retained their independence as the Republic of the United Provinces (1579–81).

What light, if any, can geography throw upon this short but momentous episode in the history of political liberty?

The Spanish Netherlands in the middle of the sixteenth century occupied much the same territory as the present Holland and Belgium, with a slice of what is now northern France, including Lille, Arras, and Cambrai. Geologically and racially, the whole area belongs to the Baltic plain, of which it forms the extreme south-western corner, shelving up into the higher ground that connects the Pas-de-Calais with the Ardennes, and mixing its Low German dialects with the half-French speech of the Walloons. It is, in fact, the delta of the Rhine, and its nearest counterparts are the low-lying marshes and sands at the mouths of the Weser, Elbe, and Oder. But because Rome became the centre of western civilization, and the Rhineland its route to the north, the southern Netherlands was the only part of what is naturally Germany to be included in what was politically Gaul; and this start in the race of civilization it has never wholly lost. Besides, nowhere on the north-western coast of Europe was there a harder struggle between man and the elements; nowhere did life and wealth more depend upon patient enterprise;

and this has certainly had its effect upon the character
of the inhabitants. Though the rainfall is not excessive,
the climate is very damp and foggy; and though the
mean annual temperature is moderate, the winters are
uncommonly cold. But the real enemy is the sea, and
it is in this contest that the virtues most typical of the
Netherlanders have been developed.

A modern map of Holland and Belgium is little help
towards understanding what the country was like in
the time of Philip II. Part of what is there shown as
water was then land, and part of what is marked as
land below sea-level was then water. In Roman times
the inner part of the Zuyder Zee was the Lacus Flevo,
connected with the sea by a narrow channel at its
north-west corner. Both here and in the Lauwers Zee
the protecting reef of sand seems to have been broken
down in the storms of the thirteenth century. In the
early middle ages Bruges was a seaport, at the head of
the Swin inlet: it is now ten miles from the coast.
South of Haarlem was a lake covering seventy square
miles. Dordrecht, still on the mainland, was a con-
venient capital for the Counts of Holland. But ever
since the fifteenth century the work of reclamation
has been going on, and some 3,600 square kilometres
of land have been dyked and drained—'impoldered'
—for agricultural purposes.

A comparison of the map of the Netherlands as it
was in the sixteenth century (v. Map L) with what
it is at the present day shows what great changes
have taken place, and how necessary it is to take
them into account in trying to arrive at a true idea of
the conditions under which the War of Independence
was fought out. The geographical forces which had

damaged the commercial supremacy of the southern
provinces, by silting up their outlets to the sea, had
strengthened the defences of the northern provinces by

deepening the inlet at the mouth of the Rhine, and by
enlarging the area of lagoon-lands in Holland. All
the country north of Rotterdam and Utrecht must
have been extremely difficult to approach, Haarlem
and Alkmaar almost inaccessible.

If the course of the struggle in the Netherlands

cannot be properly followed without some idea of the geography of that country in the sixteenth century, it is equally important to realize the racial causes of that separation between the northern and southern provinces in which the war ended. In Caesar's time the northern side of the Rhine delta divided the Menapii, a sub-tribe of the Belgae, who belonged to Gallia, from the Batavi, who belonged to Germania. At the time of Germanicus's campaigns (A.D. 14–16), the Batavi had spread southwards into the 'good lands' of the delta, from which they are supposed to have got their name, and had earned the respect and alliance of the emperors as providing some of the best soldiers in the Roman army. The Belgae immediately to the south had a like reputation among the Celtic-speaking tribes: and this military rivalry was accentuated by different methods of life, different religions, and different forms of political organization. The Frankish invasion broke through the Rhine frontier, much as the North Sea broke through the Frisian islands, and swung round the frontier between German and Celt from an east and west to a north and south direction. During the whole of the Middle Ages the Scheldt, not the Rhine, was the dividing line; with the result that the Belgae lost their purity of race, whilst the Batavi were confirmed in their independence. It was the compulsory union of these long-separated peoples under the Burgundian rule in the fifteenth century which brought about the troubles of the sixteenth.

Under the easy rule of Maximilian I and Charles V, and the slack discipline of foreign archbishoprics, the industrial interests which were the real life of the southern states prevented subdivision. But when

Philip II attacked the spiritual, political, and industrial independence of the country, the lack of unity between the northern and southern states became apparent. This was at first an embarrassment to William the Silent in his attempt to unite the whole country against Spanish tyranny, and afterwards an aid to Don John and Alexander Farnese in separating the southern provinces from the northern, and in bringing them back under Spanish rule.

Meanwhile geography was making possible the long defence and ultimate liberation of the north. The triple moat of the Rhine and Meuse from Cleves to Dordrecht, and the natural or artificial lagoons that barred approach to so many of the Dutch cities, reduced the attack to a series of isolated sieges, none of which could be decisive; whilst the sea was open to the 'Beggars' and their English allies. Holland, Philip soon discovered, was a second England, another invincible island. England had been the grave of the Spanish fleet: Holland became the grave of the Spanish army.

It was its island character which conditioned the greatness of Holland in the century that followed its escape from Spanish rule—the island safety of its position, the island facilities of its trade, and the island independence of its people. It became for northern Europe and the Political Revolution what another lagoon-state, Venice, had been for southern Europe and the Political Renaissance—a home of minorities and a cradle of new ideas.

English travellers of the seventeenth century were full of admiration for the way in which the Dutch had overcome the natural disadvantages of their country.

Peter Mundy, who was there in 1640, describes it as a land which 'naturally of itt selffe is unproffitable and unusefull for Man or Beast; and, as some say, where all the foure elements are corrupted, viz. the Earth marshy, muddy; the Water brackish, stinking (I mean their wells); in some places the Aire participates of both by his vicinity; and for Fire, thier chieffest fewell being turffe '.

' Notwithstanding all these inconveniences,' he goes on, ' they have by their engenious labours and cleanlinesse soe corrected them, that they have made a place where they live in health and wealth, ease and pleasure. For allthough the land, and thatt with much labour, is brought only to pasture, and thatt butt in summer neither, yett by meanes of their shipping they are plentifully suplied with what the earth affoards for the use off man, as corne, pitch, tarre, flax hempe, etts. from Dantzicke, Cunningsberg, etts. in the Balticke Sea; masts, fish, etts. from Norway; from Denmarcke, cattle; and from any part off the world besides, either in Europe, Asia, Affricke, or America, where any trade is, with the most pretious and ritche Comodities off those parts, with which supplying other countries they more and more enritche their owne.'

II

The French Wars of Religion, the second of the great struggles arising out of the Reformation, were contemporaneous with the first—the Revolt of the Netherlands—and lasted as long as the third—the Thirty Years' War in Germany. From 1562 to 1593, with short intervals, France was the victim of what was at once a civil and a religious struggle, in which Catholics were at war with Protestants, the bourgeoisie with the noblesse, and the landed barons with the Crown. How

far can it be said that these rivalries, and the strife to which they gave rise, were conditioned by geography?

It has already been pointed out that there are geographical grounds for the political disunity which has played so large a part in French history. The flow of national life in France has been constantly and increasingly from the provinces towards the capital. It has achieved unity in Paris; but that unity has not flowed back into the provinces. This political disunity, based upon geography, was one of the causes of the French wars of religion. There had already been half a century of foreign war, beginning with the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII in 1494. During the earlier part of this period the kings of France had often been absent from their country, the provincial seigneurs had got out of control, and the government's chief representative had been the tax-collector. Under Francis I, though the Italian adventure had continued, there had also been an attempt to bring the seigneurs to order, to suppress the Parlements, and to centralize the provincial government in the hands of king's officers, the forerunners of the later Intendants. This development, too, contributed to the wars of religion. Francis anticipated Richelieu: the wars of religion foreshadowed the Fronde. The Huguenot bourgeoisie, mostly drawn from the industrial districts of the southern provinces, joined hands with the discontented noblesse, 'parlementaires', and anti-clericals. The defence of a persecuted religion dropped more and more into the background: its place was taken by a fight for political power.

In this connexion a study of the distribution of the Huguenot population is most instructive. Apart from

a few outlying centres, of which the most important
was Normandy, the bulk of the Protestants lay south
of a line drawn from Lyon to La Rochelle. This
line roughly coincides with the frontier between the
Langue d'oc dialects to the south and the Langue d'oïl
to the north; as also with that between the Droit
Écrit to the south and the Droit Coutumier to the
north (v. Map on p. 32). This was, in fact, the line of
division between the districts more fully and less fully
influenced during the Roman occupation. But if the
inquiry is pushed farther back it appears that its basis
is originally geographical; for it comes just where the
central heights of the Auvergne plateau stretch farthest
from east to west (the 600 ft. contour line runs within
about 50 miles of La Rochelle), affording an effective
barrier to the northward spread of Roman settlements,
language, and law. The existence of this frontier between
a more Romanized and a less Romanized type of
Frenchman was not, indeed, the immediate cause of the
success of Protestantism in the south or of its failure in
the north; but it had led to differences in outlook and
occupation—as, for instance, the southerner's liking
for trade and manufacture and his aptitude for new
ideas—which were contributing causes; for Hugue-
notism travelled along the trade-routes, and settled
among people whose minds had been broadened by
affairs, or educated in universities.

Strategically, the Protestants were in a strong posi-
tion. They lay on a wide front hardly ever less than
250 miles from Paris, supported in the centre by the
Huguenot strongholds of Navarre and the Cevennes,
and flanked by the open port of La Rochelle and the
free city of Geneva. They were open to serious attack

only by the gap between Angoulême and La Rochelle:
and most of the fighting took place outside the Pro-
testant districts. The goal of both parties was the geo-
graphical as well as the political centre of the country,
namely Paris.

The outline of the campaigns, then, was settled by
the relative positions of the combatants, and by the
general geographical conditions. It is no less important
to realize that the details of the fighting were deter-
mined by causes of a geographical or semi-geographical
nature. As in ancient times winter voyaging was
tabooed, so in medieval and early modern times was
winter campaigning. The effect of winter upon the
conditions of warfare was to reduce the margin of
safety to a minimum. The roads became impassable,
the rivers were in flood, the bridges were washed away,
camping out became a misery, and food was often un-
obtainable. Even in the finest summer weather all or
any of these factors might upset the best-laid plans, and
had always to be taken into serious account. The state
of the rivers affected the possibility of transport,
particularly that of artillery and ammunition. The
position and state of repair of the few bridges that
spanned the important rivers was of vital consequence,
especially if they were so narrow that it might take all
day for an army of 10,000 to 12,000 men to get across.
The possibility of robbing an orchard, rounding up
a herd of cattle, or plundering a country town meant
life or death for an army that was accompanied by a
train of women and baggage. Marshes and forest-
lands had to be avoided, and mounted men could not
move in a country of vineyards. But above all there
was the question of roads. It must not be supposed

that, because all the roads were bad, or because armies seem often to have wandered across country, these campaigns were not mainly dependent on the road-system. From the attempts that have been made to
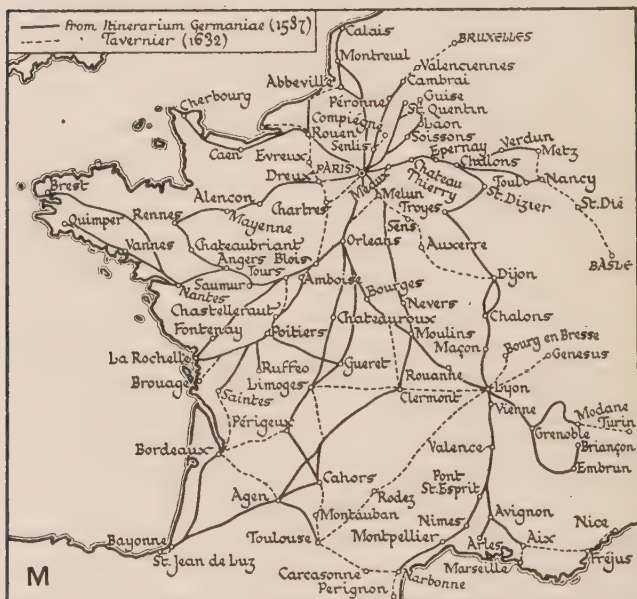
map the chief marches it is evident that the Roman roads were still the main routes from town to town, and that armies did not diverge far from these, so long as they were available. It is equally clear that they often took to side roads (no better than our cart tracks) when making for places off the main roads, and that not seldom they wandered at large across the country-side, where the state of the ground or the character of its cultivation allowed. In Charles IX's tour of the

provinces in 1564-6, when he traversed great parts of the eastern, southern, and western districts of France, from Paris to Champagne, from Champagne to Marseilles, and from Marseilles to Bordeaux, he hardly ever left the Roman roads. There was one divergence to Bar-le-Duc, to attend a baptism, and another to Bayonne, for a conference with the King of Spain; otherwise he was following the track of the traders of the last thousand years. From the Garonne to the Loire he was less well served by the old roads, but returned to them in the Loire valley, and made some use of them in the last stretch of his journey, between Blois and Clermont, and back to Paris. Princes, no doubt, travelled more comfortably than troops; but the same rule applied to both—to follow a road whenever possible. Charles IX's journey, as well as the campaigns of the Wars of Religion, can be checked by contemporary Itineraries, two of which (*Itinerarium Germaniae*, 1587, and Tavernier, 1632) have been used in compiling Map M.

In any case, travelling in France in the sixteenth century was no luxury. From a guide-book published at Rheims in 1555, which therefore describes the French roads just at the time of the Wars of Religion, we learn that there were some 280 roads in the country commonly used for the business of government or of trade; but that few of these were without bad or dangerous sections. 'This part is difficult in muddy weather'; 'a very bad road in winter'; 'Basec Wood, a dangerous bit'; 'take to the fields on the east side'; 'go behind the village in winter'; 'a bad road, devilish bad (*rue de diable*), in the field along the river-bank'; or 'an infernal road (*rue d'enfer*), a wicked one, and dangerous

owing to brigands', are among the notes added for the
benefit of travellers. They may, however, have been
cheered on their way to learn that 'good white wine'
or 'excellent claret' was to be expected at the next
stopping-place.

III

The last and most disastrous of the wars arising out
of the Reformation was the Thirty Years' War in
Germany (1618–48). Its original motives were religious.
The Protestant states, led by the Calvinist Union,
demanded ecclesiastical independence: the forces of
the Counter-Reformation, headed by the Emperor and
the Elector of Bavaria, sought to destroy it. But in
a world that neither believed in religious toleration
nor provided political guarantees for it the only security
for liberty of conscience was the possession of land.
The religious motive was therefore mixed, from the
start, with the desire for territorial independence on
the one side and for territorial aggrandisement on the
other. It was a fight for and against a 'Protestant's
Freehold'. A successful Counter-Reformation would
leave Austria as much master of Germany—body and
soul—as it might have left Spain master of the Nether-
lands. And with this went a further motive, the desire
to obtain control over the seaboard and trade of the
Baltic, which the failure of the Hanseatic League had
thrown as a prize at the feet of the northern powers.

Whichever of these motives ultimately ruled the
contest, the relative positions of the combatants on
the map of Germany was bound to determine the main
directions of the fighting. Four points seem to call
for special notice. First, practically the whole of the

territory west of the Rhine and south of the Danube which was included in Germany—the territory that had once been Roman, and that still had Roman towns and Roman roads—was in Catholic hands : the Catholics encircled the south German Protestants. This enabled Spain and Austria to join hands; and it was to break through this ring of steel, which seemed to him as menacing to Catholic France as to Protestant Germany, that Richelieu intervened in the war. Secondly, both sides were embarrassed by outlying possessions in the enemy's country: Catholic bishoprics such as Paderborn, Hildesheim, and Münster found themselves isolated in Protestant north Germany, whilst Baden, Württemberg, and the Palatinate were cut off from the northern Protestant states by the Catholic bishoprics of the Main valley. But the advantage here lay with the Catholics; for Münster and Paderborn, at any rate, formed part of a Catholic block of states on the lower Rhine, whereas the south German Protestants were surrounded by religious enemies. Thirdly, Bohemia, the scene of the outbreak of hostilities, whilst admirably adapted by its mountain rampart to be a home of national unity and political independence, turns its weakest side towards Austria; and its reduction in the first years of the war compromised the Protestant position in south Germany, as Gustavus Adolphus found to his cost in 1632. Fourthly, it was a serious matter for the economic development of Catholic south Germany that the main reaches of all the great rivers—in those days high roads of travel and commerce—ran through Protestant lands into a sea surrounded by Protestant powers. It was this feeling that prompted the northern campaign of Wallenstein in 1627-8, and it was Austria's failure to

prevent the Swedish occupation of the Baltic ports
that determined her critical change of front after 1648,
when she gave up hopes of Baltic supremacy, and con-
soled herself with dreams of an empire on the Aegean.

Coming to the details of the war, we shall make al-
lowance for the same geographical factors as we have
already found to have been operative in the Dutch and
French wars: only they will tend to be more important
here in proportion as the country east and north of the
Rhine and Danube was less civilized than that on their
nearer banks. There were still huge areas of undrained
marshlands along the river valleys, and of unreclaimed
mud-flats fringing the northern coasts. Forests still
covered a large proportion of the plains, and made the
mountain districts impassable. Cultivation was confined
to the river valleys and the forest clearings. Outside
a few favoured districts the margin of production—the
surplus of agricultural produce—was very small. For all
these reasons the actual areas over which armies could
operate was limited, and the disastrous effect of the
war upon the country was largely due to its being con-
centrated upon the richest and most thickly populated
parts, the valleys of the Elbe, Oder, and Main; Moravia,
Bohemia, Saxony, and Württemberg.

But the deciding factor, where the movements of
armies is concerned, must always be the roads; and it
is rather extraordinary to find that so little attention
is paid to this aspect of the war either in the standard
histories or in the historical atlases. Why did Mans-
feld in 1621–2 march from Pilsen to Nuremberg, then
to Wiesloch near Mannheim, then across the Moselle
not far from Metz, down the Meuse to Fleurus, and
through the Netherlands to East Friesland? Primarily,

no doubt, for plunder; but also because there were,
and are, important roads for each stage of this journey.
Why, in 1626, did he march from Dessau to Berlin,
and then right up the Oder valley to the Moravian
gap, unless for the same reasons? Would Gustavus
Adolphus have spent so much valuable time in 1631
negotiating for a passage through Berlin if there had
been other practicable roads by which to go to the
help of Magdeburg? Would he have risked a breach
with Richelieu after the battle of Breitenfeld by march-
ing on the Catholic bishoprics of the Main valley,
unless there had been a well-travelled trade-route
leading in that direction, whilst the direct road to
Vienna led through the forests of the Erzgebirge and
the recently devastated area of Bohemia—a route that it
was at any rate risky to attempt so late in the summer?

These suggestions can be tested by reference to con-
temporary maps and guide-books. One of the earliest
and most interesting is that printed by Georg Glogk of
Nuremberg in 1501 (v. Frontispiece), including central
Europe from Paris to Cracow and from Denmark and
Scotland to south France and central Italy. The fact
that this map is printed (as we should say) upside down
is one of the earliest signs of the change of front brought
about by the maritime discoveries of the fifteenth
century. Europe is already regarded from the point
of view of the Baltic rather than of the Mediterranean.
Nuremberg is, of course, to a loyal Nuremberger the
centre of the map, and from it roads radiate out to
Wiborg, Danzig, Cracow, Ofen, Rome, Barcelona,
Paris, and even Canterbury. Most of these roads, and
many more, appear also in the itineraries called *The
Post of the World* (1576) and *Itinerarium Germaniae*

(1587), from which Map N has been reconstructed. This is particularly interesting because it gives the German road-system on the eve of the Thirty Years' War. Perhaps the most striking point is the large number of roads habitually used, principally for trading purposes, at this period. This was particularly the case in the area of central and south-western Germany bounded by Münster, Magdeburg, Dresden, Prague, Augsburg, Strasbourg, and Cologne—the commercial and industrial heart of Europe. Nor was travelling particularly difficult, until the war broke up the roads and depopulated the country-side. An English traveller (Fynes Moryson) in 1591 speaks of a daily ferry from Stade to Hamburg, daily coaches between Hamburg and Lübeck, and daily carriers between Nuremberg and Augsburg, whilst barges were drawn up the Danube by teams of ten or more horses as far as Ulm. Travel was impeded by natural obstacles such as marshes and woods, as well as by artificial barriers set up for the collection of tolls at bridges and forts. It was pleasant, no doubt, to pass (south of Nuremberg), through ' a wood of juniper, full of blackberries and barberries '; and at Prague there were iced drinks, and pickled oysters from England. But in the Grisons district, crossing to Italy, Moryson notes—' Out of the wood neere Lanzi, in the twilight of the evening, I did heare more than a hundred woolves howling '; and near Chalons, in east France, he is set upon and robbed by a band of discharged soldiers. Travelling was slow: a wagon holding eight persons covered from half a mile to a mile an hour; a boat might do as much as five miles in four hours.

Two other features of this road-system are worthy of
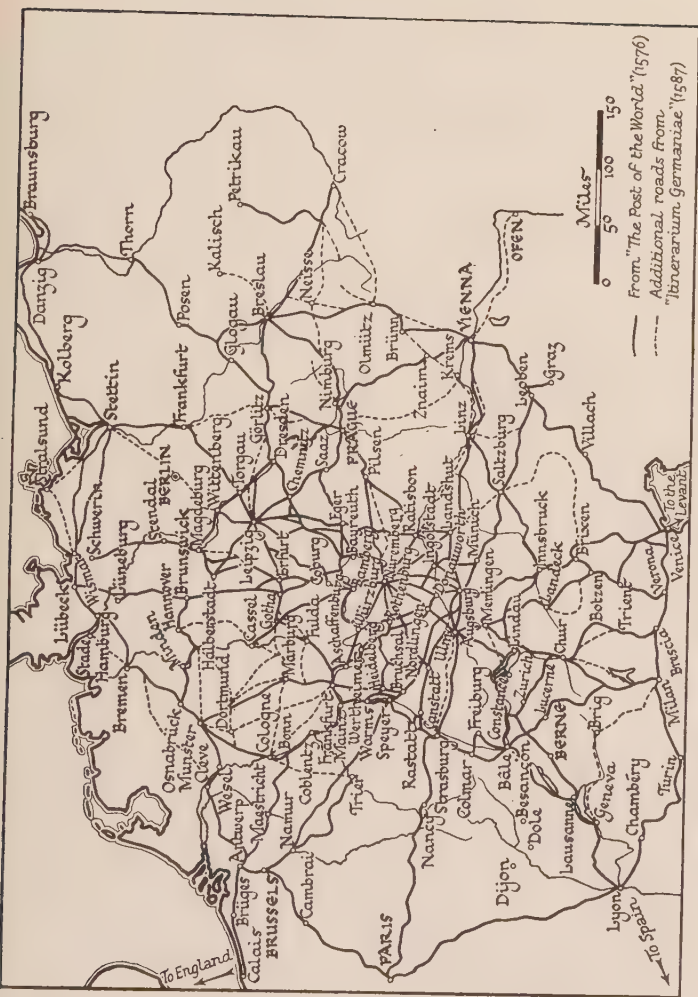
MAP N. GERMAN ROADS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Miles
0   50   100   150

—— From "The Post of the World" (1576)
---- Additional roads from
       "Itinerarium germaniae" (1587)

attention. One is the marked difference, in the matter
of road facilities, between the parts of Germany east
and west of a line drawn from Innsbruck to Berlin.
The superiority of the western area consists almost
entirely in the number of routes from south to north,
in other words the trade-routes from the Adriatic to
the Baltic. In the parts east of this imaginary line the
routes run from west to east along the lines of German
conquest and colonization. The same stages of develop-
ment may be seen in many 'new' countries, where the
interests of expansion come first, and those of inter-
communication second.

The other feature to be noticed is the extent to which
road and river routes coincide. Here too there is a
marked contrast between eastern and western Germany.
In the early stages of development the rivers, nearly
all of which run from south-east to north-west, pro-
vided the easiest means of intercommunication between
the routes of expansion from south-west to north-east.
They still remained important travel- and trade-routes
down till the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was
not till the growth of commercial rivalry among the
riverside towns made through traffic too expensive that
it became worth while to build roads along the river
valleys; and in any case the early road-makers avoided
the valleys as much as possible, through fear of marshes
or floods. The appearance, therefore, of roads along the
banks of the Weser, Saale, Main, and Elbe (the Rhine
and Danube already had them in Roman times) is an
indication of commercial progress; and their relative
absence further east shows how undeveloped those
parts still remained.

One of the great hindrances to road-building was

of course the forests; and this was particularly so in
northern and eastern Germany, which was particularly
rich in forest-lands. Besides, the point of transition
from deforestation to afforestation, due to too much
destruction of timber for shipbuilding or fuel, was
reached in the west by the middle of the fourteenth
century, but not till two or three centuries later in
the east. And the forests ran wild during the Thirty
Years' War to such an extent that (for instance) the
Great Elector included a programme of forest-clearing
in his plans for the regeneration of the Brandenburg
lands (1663-4). That these and other obstacles to road-
building were still serious in the seventeenth century,
and indeed remained so till long afterwards, is shown
by the continued use of the rivers, and by the con-
struction of canals, such as that between the Oder and
the Elbe (via the Spree), completed by the Great
Elector in 1662-8, or Frederick the Great's Plaueschen,
Templiner, and Bromberger canals (1743-72).

Though we may and must adopt modern terms in
speaking of the communications that played so large
a part in the Thirty Years' War, we must use our
imagination to reconstruct the real nature of the roads,
rivers, bridges, and canals so described. We can get
some help towards this from the contemporary prints
of towns and battlefields, such as are reproduced in
Gindely's history of the war; or (in a negative sense),
from seventeenth-century atlases such as those of
Speed, Blaeu, or Moses Pitt. The roads are rarely
mapped beyond the environs of the large towns, except
in a few progressive districts like the Netherlands, and
round these centres they are so numerous that they
clearly correspond to our cart-tracks and footpaths

rather than to our made roads. They were, in fact, so bad that it was necessary to have a number of alternative routes; and the successful use of them must have depended upon the knowledge of local guides, as it still is in unmapped and uncivilized countries. Of bridges, again, there is no dearth near the towns. But how many of them were in good repair? And how many roads were bridged throughout? Besides, the crucial bridges were those over the larger or less fordable rivers; and these were not only rare, but also generally guarded by fortified towns—a fact which goes far to explain the number of sieges in medieval and early modern warfare. These bridges were commonly built of wood, either throughout or in part, so that they could be easily destroyed in face of an enemy. Thus, in 1672, Condé employed 400 men to burn the Strasbourg bridge over the Rhine—a wooden bridge of sixty-five arches, and 'so narrow that a horseman can hardly pass by a cart'—in order to stop the advance of an Imperial army from Frankfurt. At Bâle too the Rhine bridge, though 'broad enough for two carts to pass at once', had a wooden section at the town end. Being so built, these bridges were also more liable to accidental destruction, like that over the Vistula at Thorn, which Peter Mundy described and sketched, and which was often broken down in winter by floating ice. Again, although the rivers were much used for transport, they were seldom properly cleared, or dredged, or their banks kept in repair: and navigation was interfered with, not only by fallen trees, shallows and rapids, not only by customs barriers and toll-gates, but also by nets, weirs, and other fishing apparatus. The interests of the local inhabitant were always at war with those

of the stranger, and it was the 'through traffic' which generally suffered, unless or until there arose a central government strong enough to keep the routes open, or a confederacy of commercial cities able to protect its own interests.

One other consideration which directed the course of armies during the Thirty Years' War may be mentioned here, though its connexion with geography is only indirect. The roads were followed not only because they were roads, but also because they led to the towns. The population of Germany in 1618 probably amounted to 16–17 millions, most of whom lived in the small scattered hamlets that look so large and thickly sown on contemporary maps. In these country districts there was little surplus production, and no margin of wealth. An army might burn and loot its way through the country-side; its real goal must be the next vulnerable town. In these the chance of plunder varied roughly with the population. Few German cities had as many as 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants. Cologne probably came first with a population estimated (in the 16th century), at 37,000; not far short of it came Strasbourg (25,000 late in the 15th century), Nuremberg (25,000 to 30,000 in 1449), Ulm (20,000 in 1427), Hamburg (19,000 in 1594), Breslau (21,866 in 1348), and Lübeck (30,000 in the 16th century).[1]

The devastation caused by the Thirty Years' War finally brought about its own remedy. The roads degenerated, the bridges broke down, the fields went

[1] The figures are from Kretschmer (*Historische Geographie von Mitteleuropa*, p. 497), who evidently thinks that they may be too high.

out of cultivation, the peasantry died of starvation, or fled into the towns, trade was at a standstill, and plague finished the work that famine had begun. The war came to an end because it was no longer possible for an army to exist in such a land. Geography had its revenge.
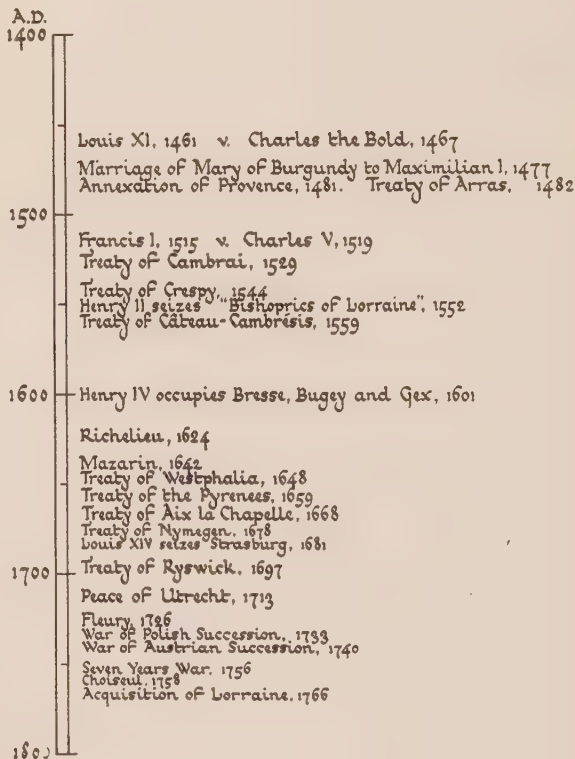
VII. THE NATURAL FRONTIERS OF FRANCE

'THE limits of the Republic are marked by Nature herself. We shall reach them all, towards every point of the compass, the Rhine, the Atlantic, and the Alps. That is where the frontiers of the Republic ought to end.' So cried Danton in the Convention on January 31, 1793; and was applauded by every good Rousseauist, to whom the voice of the people was the voice of Nature herself.

Danton, of course, spoke for France, and for the traditional policy of the French kings. Their motives had not been the law of nature, but the need of land; and if they tried to justify their aggression, it was not on geographical grounds, but on historical. They had been taught their map of 'Gallia' under the Roman occupation, and they could not help seeing what a neat frontier it had eastwards in the Rhine. The Roman roads did not end at the Meuse or the Saône. There were the same Roman place-names in Alsace and Lorraine as in Burgundy or Champagne. They did not know, or they chose to forget, that the Roman occupation had never been so effective in the lands east of the Vosges and the Ardennes—that it had been a transitional zone between Romanized Gallia and barbarian Germania, and that it remained German in language and sentiment. They talked of Charlemagne as their predecessor, and thought of the French nation as born in his revival of Roman Gaul: forgetting that Charlemagne was a German, and that Rome never created a French any more than it created an Italian nationality.

FRENCH NATIONAL FRONTIERS
Three Centuries of Advance Eastwards

A.D.
1400

Louis XI, 1461   v.   Charles the Bold, 1467

Marriage of Mary of Burgundy to Maximilian I, 1477
Annexation of Provence, 1481.   Treaty of Arras,   1482

1500

Francis I, 1515   v.   Charles V, 1519
Treaty of Cambrai, 1529

Treaty of Crespy, 1544
Henry II seizes "Bishoprics of Lorraine", 1552
Treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis, 1559

1600   Henry IV occupies Bresse, Bugey and Gex, 1601

Richelieu, 1624

Mazarin, 1642
Treaty of Westphalia, 1648
Treaty of the Pyrenees, 1659
Treaty of Aix la Chapelle, 1668
Treaty of Nymegen, 1678
Louis XIV seizes Strasburg, 1681

1700   Treaty of Ryswick, 1697

Peace of Utrecht, 1713

Fleury, 1726
War of Polish Succession, 1733
War of Austrian Succession, 1740
Seven Years War, 1756
Choiseul, 1758
Acquisition of Lorraine, 1766

1800

Nor were they ignorant of the history of those 300 years during which the eastern frontier of France had slowly, and at the cost of much blood and treasure, been advanced towards the Rhine (*v.* Map O). It had begun with Burgundy, that ambiguous country, half on the French and half on the German side of the watershed between the Seine and the Saône. The treacherous part that it had played in the Hundred Years' War, and the nearness of its western extension to Paris, determined Louis XI, in the middle of the fifteenth century, to re-unite it to the French crown. Charles the Bold's attempt to combine it with Lorraine and the Netherlands, and to make the whole into a new Middle Kingdom independent both of the King of France and of the Emperor of Germany, gave him his opportunity. On Charles's defeat and death the western part of Burgundy—the Duchy, as it was called—became French, and remained so, in spite of its forced surrender (which was repudiated and never carried out) by Francis I at the Treaty of Madrid (1526). Geographically, this was all that France at that time could claim. But in the constant wars with the Empire that marked the seventeenth century, eastern Burgundy, or the Franche Comté, became an object of French anxiety and ambition, owing to its geographical position as the passage to Alsace and Savoy. Outflanked on the south by Henry IV's annexation of Bresse and Bugey (1601), and on the north by the occupation of the 'three bishoprics' of Metz, Toul, and Verdun (the work of Henry II in 1559, confirmed by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648), it was finally secured by Louis XIV at the Treaty of Nimwegen (1678). Meanwhile Alsace had been secured piecemeal, by the Treaty of Westphalia and Louis XIV's
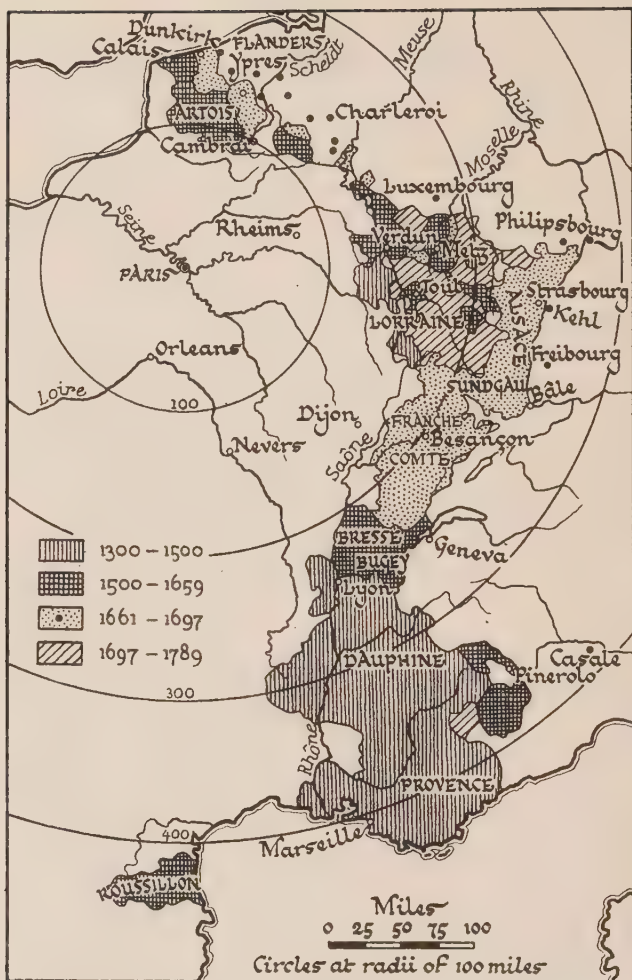
MAP O.   THE FRENCH FRONTIER

'Chambers of Reunion', culminating in the seizure of Strasbourg in 1681. And finally Lorraine had become French by negotiation in 1766. Looking back on all these advances, a patriot of 1793 might be excused for thinking that France had some historical right to the eastern frontier of Gaul; whereas in fact the question of right had long been left behind—perhaps ever since the crossing of the watershed east of the Seine—and it had become a question of the ability of French arms, and French diplomacy, to take and to keep such new territories as would enrich and secure the old.

But if the Rhine frontier was bad history, it might yet be good geography. To Danton and his friends, no doubt, it mattered little whether or not it could be upheld by rational argument, so long as it served to cover a policy of annexation, and to bring fresh recruits to the colours. But from the point of view of political geography few questions are more interesting or important than those raised by Danton's claim. What is a 'natural frontier'? and what, more particularly, are the natural frontiers of France?

I

A frontier is that part of a country which borders on another: a boundary or frontier-line is the actual line between them. Both terms have a political sense, and imply a difference in government between the countries on either side of the boundary. But there are generally other reasons for the existence of frontiers; and it will be as well to classify them.

(1) A purely 'artificial frontier' is that created by drawing a political boundary regardless of such other conditions as we shall proceed to mention. Such, for

instance, is the frontier-line between Canada and the United States, or some of the internal boundaries of Africa.

(2) Where a frontier-line coincides with differences of race, language, religion, or essential customs, it becomes what may be called a 'human frontier'.

(3) Where it separates areas whose industrial and commercial interests are widely different, or whose economic needs are supplied from different centres, it produces an 'economic frontier'.

(4) It is only where any of these types of frontier coincide with striking geographical facts that we can speak of a 'natural frontier'.

(5) For sake of completeness we must add that any of these frontiers may be reinforced by walls, ditches, fortresses, or other artificial means, and thus become 'military frontiers'. Such were Offa's Dyke and the Great Wall of China.

So far, so good. It is when the different forms of 'natural frontiers' come to be discussed that difficulties arise. Seas, lakes, rivers, marshes, forests, and mountains at once suggest themselves. But there is hardly one of these classes to which notable exceptions cannot be found; seas, like the Mediterranean, which have been the centres and carriers of a common civilization; lakes, like that of Lucerne, which have created political unities; rivers, like the Rhine, which have given a special character and body of interests to dwellers of different race on either bank; and mountain ranges, even of the importance of the Alps, whose passes have served as doors rather than as barriers to successive generations of invaders. Even marshes and forests have not always been imperviable: even deserts, which

have been most nearly so, have their oases, their trade-routes, and their caravans. This failure of some 'natural frontiers' to do their work may be due either to their clashing with other kinds of frontier (when kinship of race or common economic interests over-leap physical barriers), or to inherent weaknesses; for there are few mountain ranges without practicable passes, few rivers without fords or islands, few forests or marshes without ways through.

II

In any case it is one thing to define and classify natural frontiers, and another thing to say what are the natural frontiers of any given country. Take, for instance, Danton's claim. *Are* the Rhine, the Atlantic, and the Alps the natural frontiers of France? The Atlantic, certainly; and, one may add, the English Channel and the Gulf of Lions: nothing could be more final than these long stretches of seaboard frontier. Then, in the south-west, there is the natural barrier of the Pyrenees, which, although it has not prevented the overlapping of French and Spanish populations at either end (as illustrated by the history of Roussillon or of Navarre), affords during the greater part of its length the best example of a mountain frontier in Europe. But what are the natural frontiers of France between the Gulf of Lions and the English Channel? There are four zones to be considered, and they may be roughly defined by the parallels of latitude 46, 48, and 50 N.

First, from the head of the Gulf of Lions to the junction of the Rhone and Saône, are we to choose the river itself, or the steep scarp of the Cevennes to its

west, or the more distant watershed of the Alps to the east? The weakness of the Rhone as a frontier is that it has a delta, and is easiest to cross just where the stress of settlement and trade has been most severe. To choose the line of the Cevennes as the frontier would be to accept the view that France does not naturally consist of anything outside the three river-basins of the Seine, Loire, and Garonne, and to allow it little more extension westwards than belonged to the dominions of Charles the Bald after the Partition of Verdun (843). But, as we have seen, the watershed between the French rivers and the 'corridor' of the Rhine, Saône, and Rhone valleys is so inferior, as a barrier, to the line of the Alps, Jura, and Vosges that geography excuses the historical tendency of the French people to overflow into this 'Middle Kingdom'. The weakness of the Cevennes is that they have no clear summit-line, and can be circumvented at either end, particularly in the south, where the Canal du Midi marks a route followed by traders and travellers from very early times. It would seem then that, on purely geographical grounds, the Rhone valley is part of France, and that the natural frontier is here the watershed of the western Alps.

What about the next section, from the junction of the Rhone and Saône to the bend of the Rhine at Bâle? Here too there are three alternatives—the line of the Jura, which is really the continuation in this section of the watershed of the western Alps; or the river Saône; or, farther west, the northern extension of the Cevennes—the Côte d'Or and the Langres Plateau. Here the choice must be the same as in the previous section: for the western heights are less of a barrier than the Cevennes, the Saône has more openings to

the west than the Rhone, and the Jura affords a neat and formidable boundary.

Northwards from Bâle the problem becomes more difficult. The western line of heights breaks up, north of the Langres Plateau: one strip runs along the west bank of the Meuse and becomes the Argonne; another separates the Meuse from the Moselle, and connects up with the Eifel and Ardennes. The line of the Saône is continued by the Meuse; or is it by the Moselle? The Jura, after a deep drop at the gap of Belfort, re-appears as the Vosges, and continues northward in the lesser hills that fill the angle between the Rhine and the Moselle. If Nature has drawn any line here, it would seem to be that of the Vosges, and of the hills east of the Meuse, joining up with the Ardennes. But Danton says 'the Rhine'. Can that be justified on geographical grounds? No; for although the Rhine has few tributaries during its run from Bâle to Mainz, it is almost as open to cross traffic, north of Strasbourg, as is the Rhone south of Avignon; and it is not the river itself, but the river valley, not the Rhine, but the Rhine-land, which is the geographical unit; so that, if France is to go east of the Vosges, it cannot find a natural frontier short of the Black Forest, which bounds the Rhine eastwards, as the Alps bound the Rhone, and the Jura the Saône. In other words, the demand for the Rhine frontier might be based upon history, or upon political expediency, or upon military needs: the one ground upon which it cannot be justified is that of geography.

A minor point remains. The frontier line is to run along the Vosges. But does this necessarily mean along the watershed, along the summit of the range? On purely geographical grounds the answer would seem

to be Yes; for this is the line that nature most obviously defines. And in the Vosges there are other reasons. The summit line is the language line between French and German. The valley-dwellers on either side drive their cattle into the upland pastures in the summer— up to, but not over, the watershed. The passes, too, are high, and do not favour the overlapping of population on either side. And, as there are no tunnels through the range, there seemed to be no need for the power which owned a nearer entrance to extend its frontier down the further slope, so as to guard an exit also. For some such reasons as these the Franco-German frontier in 1871 was drawn along the summits; with the result that the German operations on this part of the front in 1914 were hampered by their having no hold on the western side of the range.

There remains, of the eastern frontier, only the most northerly section, from the line of the Moselle to the Straits of Dover. Here the western end of the Ardennes, pushing out into the plain of Picardy, with the Meuse forming a moat in front, gives a natural starting-point: but there are few geographical features to determine the line of the frontier across the lowlands of Belgium. All the rivers—Meuse, Sambre, Lys, and Scheldt— run from south to north, and provide so many natural routes by which to violate an unnatural frontier. The slight rise north of the Oise, continued by the watershed from St. Quentin to Boulogne, has never been enough of a barrier to form an efficient frontier. Yet this is the only indication that nature supplies, and must be held to be the natural termination of the line that we have been trying to fix from the Mediterranean to the English Channel. It may be added that

if the Rhine is the natural frontier from Bâle to Strasbourg, or to Mainz, then it is also the natural frontier from Mainz to Cologne, and to its mouth. Danton meant this, and the armies of the Republic realized his dream; but since 1814 it has not been ' natural ', because it has not been practical politics.

III

The student of Political Geography must not, in any case, allow himself to be diverted by this dream of ' natural frontiers ' from the very practical and pressing problem which it represents. Ever since the Treaty of Verdun (843) placed the east boundary of France along the line of the Rhone, Saône, Meuse, and Scheldt (in some parts west of them), Frenchmen have been nervous about the nearness and violability of this frontier, and French foreign policy has been inspired by the desire to push it further east. This was the anxiety of Louis XI, when Charles the Bold aimed at reconstructing ' Media Francia '. This was the chief reason for Francis I's refusal to keep the terms of the Treaty of Madrid. This was the mainspring of Richelieu's diplomacy, and of Mazarin's. This was the object of the wars of Louis XIV, and of the intrigues of Fleury. It was this which made 1871 so bitter to Frenchmen, and the ' revanche ' of 1918 so intelligible. The possession of a strong frontier to the east and north-east of Paris has always seemed to be a vital necessity.

History is concerned with the political grounds of this feeling : geography has to estimate how far such motives may have been influenced by ' the lie of the land '.

The eastern frontier of France must be drawn somewhere between the extremities of the curve, most of

which is supplied by the Rhine, from Besançon to
Rotterdam. But there might be several strings to this
bow; and if we are to understand the attempts made
by so many kings and statesmen to string it, we must
examine a little more closely the geography of the area
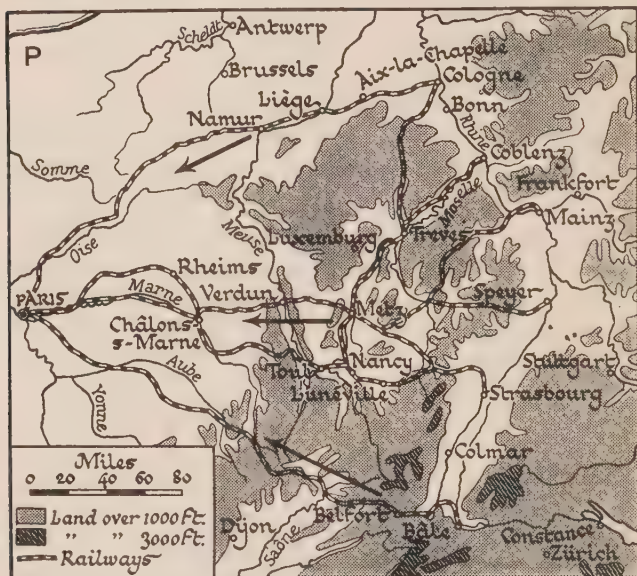
within the two extremities (v. Map P). It falls into
three zones, or rather, segments of a circle, whose centre
is Paris. The first runs from Besançon to Strasbourg,
the second from Strasbourg to Coblentz, and the third
from Coblentz to Rotterdam. Each of these segments
provides a possible route by which the frontier can be
crossed by enemy forces marching from Germany (that
is the practical way in which the problem presents itself
to Frenchmen), and each offers certain opportunities for
defence.

In the first segment the long and unbroken line of the Vosges leaves no practicable way round except by the Belfort gap and the Langres Plateau to the south. The narrow and roundabout approach from the east, the width of high ground to be crossed before the Seine basin is reached, and the proximity of neutral Switzerland, have made this route unpopular, and this segment of the frontier comparatively safe. Nevertheless the fact that eastern Burgundy, or the Franche Comté, was in foreign hands remained a constant anxiety to French statesmen from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, and its conquest by Louis XIV finally broke the power of Spain, by cutting its communications with the Netherlands; for it was by this route that the Spanish armies, debouching from the Alps, started on their march through Lorraine to the Netherlands.

The second segment, from Strasbourg to Coblenz, is the most interesting of the three, and has been the scene of the most crucial historical events. Between the Ardennes to the north and the Vosges to the south the ridge of high ground that separates France from the central Rhine breaks up, and flattens out into a plateau which hardly anywhere rises to 400 metres (1,312 ft.), and only in the river valleys sinks below 200 metres (656 ft.). This plateau is about eighty miles wide from east to west. Though as a whole it constitutes the watershed between the basins of the Rhine and the Seine, yet it carries three rivers that flow from south to north, the Saar, the Moselle, and the Meuse. This gives it a character of its own, and makes it in geography, as it is in nationality, a transition area between France to the west and Germany to the east. At the same time the easiness of approach from both

sides has made the forty-mile circle of which Metz is
the centre the chief scene of Franco-German antagon-
ism for nearly 400 years. It was in 1552 that the
'three bishoprics' of Metz, Toul, and Verdun put
themselves under the protection of Henry II, and that
Metz made its famous defence against the army of
Charles V. As a result, the possession of the bishoprics
was confirmed to the French crown in 1648 (by the
Treaty of Westphalia); and the rather misleading title
of ' Defender of the liberties of Germany ' encouraged
Henry's successors in a policy of interference and
aggression in the Rhine valley, whose rulers were always
ready to accept French gold, though they did not
always use it to further French interests. Henry IV,
on the eve of the Thirty Years' War, Richelieu and
Mazarin during its continuance, followed this method
of humbling the Austrian and the Spanish Hapsburgs.
The fresh rights of interference in German affairs
given by the Treaty of Westphalia enabled Louis XIV
to extend this policy, and to acquire new territories,
at the expense of the Empire, in the Netherlands, the
Franche Comté, and Alsace-Lorraine. His lines of
advance were dictated by just those considerations
that we have been urging, and his objectives were the
traditional crossing-places of the Rhine at Breisach,
Strasbourg (Kehl), and Germersheim (Philipsbourg).
The object and outcome of Fleury's diplomacy during
the War of Polish Succession were to secure by treaty
what Louis had failed to secure by war; and thus the
whole of Lorraine became French in 1766. The sequel,
in 1792, 1870, and 1914, is sufficiently well known. It
would be interesting, were it not outside our period,
to trace the influence of the same geographical con-

ditions upon the latter as upon the earlier happenings. At the present moment (1929) a paper war is being waged between the partisans of two opposite theories. French writers maintain that the left bank of the Rhine is racially and historically part of France. German writers insist, upon geographical and economic grounds, that the Rhineland has an identity of its own, with closer affinities to Germany than to France. The question is too much heated with political passion for a cool solution to be easily found. But on politico-geographical lines there is good reason for thinking that the central section of the frontier lands, that of which we are at present speaking, was fitted by nature, and has been confirmed by history, as a buffer-state between France and Germany, rather than as an integral part of either one or the other.

Little need be said as to the third sector of the frontier, from the Ardennes to the English Channel. It is, by common consent, as bad a frontier as there can be; flat, open, unobstructed, and with a river-system whose general direction is at right angles to the political boundary. No wonder that this country has been 'the cockpit of Europe'; or that the throwing forward of the French boundary in this direction 'line upon line, here a little and there a little', became an obsession to Louis XIV; or that the Dutch nation felt themselves so insecure, after their experiences in 1672, that they demanded and obtained the barrier fortresses of the Treaties of Ryswick (1697) and Utrecht (1713).

IV

We began this part of our subject by saying that a 'natural frontier' is one in which differences of race,

language, religion, or essential customs, or of industrial and commercial interests, or of economic needs, are reinforced by striking geographical facts. We may end it by pointing out that the 'strikingness' of geographical facts must always be to some extent relative to the state of civilization, and especially to the progress of military art. The Romans made the Rhine and Danube the frontiers of their Empire because the art of bridge-building was not enough advanced to allow of those rivers being easily crossed. When, in the Middle Ages, rivers were commonly bridged, the importance of mountain frontiers was enhanced. When tunnels could be cut under the mountain passes, the lower slopes of the range became more important strategically than the summits. Now that aviation has made both rivers and mountains as easy to cross as the flattest plain, all frontiers have become 'open', and the old frontier-lines have lost much of their 'natural' value. It seems likely that the obstructiveness of a frontier (which is, after all, its *raison d'être*), will have to be expressed in the future in new terms. It used to be reckoned that the crossing of a river, or the storming of a fort, would hold up the enemy's advance for so many hours, or days. The equivalent delay has now to be reckoned in terms of facility of transport. In other words, the old frontier was a fortified line: the new frontier will perhaps be a demilitarized zone—a neutral strip of territory between adjoining countries not less than fifty miles broad, whose roads are designedly made unfit for motor-transport, and whose railways (if they have any), are of a different gauge from those on either side.
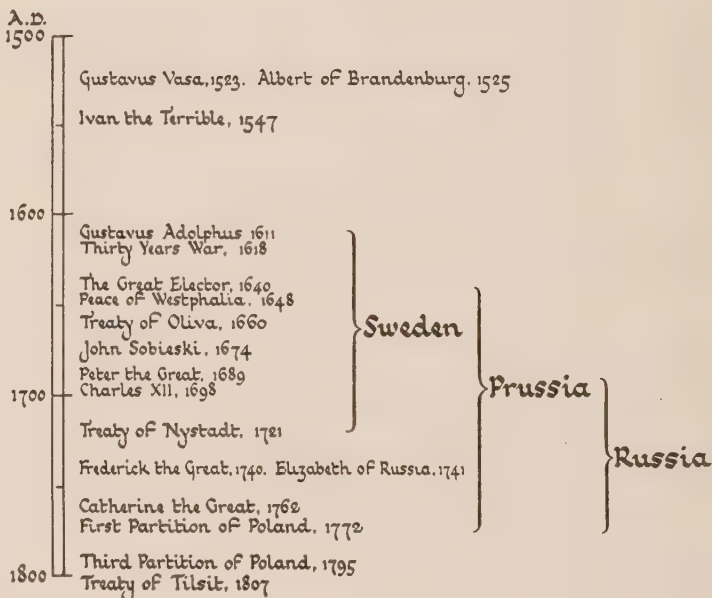
VIII. THE RISE OF THE NORTHERN POWERS

FROM the twelfth century to the nineteenth the political
storm-centre in Europe has moved round like the hand
of a clock—from Constantinople (the Crusades) to
Italy, from Italy to Portugal and Spain, from Spain to
France, Holland, and England, from the North Sea
to the Baltic, where Sweden, Russia, and Prussia in
turn made their bids for empire, and by a final swing
round again to the Nearer East. We have been trying
to trace some of the underlying geographical causes or
conditions of this phenomenon, down to the culmina-
tion of French power under Louis XIV. We have now
to see how far geography contributed to that rise of
new powers in the north which, by the middle of the
eighteenth century, altered the whole political outlook
of Europe.

I

After 1681 (the seizure of Strasbourg) or 1685 (the
revocation of the edict of Nantes) Louis XIV began
to suffer for the successes of his earlier years. By 1713,
in spite of an obstinate refusal to face the facts, France
was following the other 'old nations' into a decline.
The temporary revival of Spanish power under Alberoni,
and the success of Elizabeth Farnese's policy in Italy,
could not hide the fact that Spain was now no more than
the 'poor relation' of France. Italy in the eighteenth
century was as far from national unity as in the six-
teenth and seventeenth. Austria, still suffering from
the effects of the Thirty Years' War, became involved,
from the middle of the seventeenth century, in fresh
struggles with the Turks, who in 1683 repeated the

THREE CENTURIES IN
NORTH EUROPE

A.D.
1500

Gustavus Vasa, 1523.   Albert of Brandenburg. 1525

Ivan the Terrible, 1547

1600

Gustavus Adolphus 1611
Thirty Years War, 1618

The Great Elector, 1640
Peace of Westphalia, 1648
Treaty of Oliva, 1660   } Sweden
John Sobieski, 1674
Peter the Great, 1689
1700   Charles XII, 1698   } Prussia

Treaty of Nystadt, 1721   } Russia

Frederick the Great, 1740.   Elizabeth of Russia, 1741

Catherine the Great, 1762
First Partition of Poland, 1772

1800   Third Partition of Poland, 1795
Treaty of Tilsit, 1807

attempt of 1529, and were only driven from Vienna by the intervention of the King of Poland. The wars went on, with varying fortunes, till 1739, when the treaty of Belgrad left Austria almost bankrupt both of money and of men. Holland (the United Provinces) had become more and more dependent upon England since 1688; and the centre of maritime and commercial power was shifting from the Continent to the British Isles. The exhaustion of France after the wars of Louis XIV, and the long Anglo-French entente under Fleury and Walpole, followed by the lazy rule of Louis XV, lost France the leadership of Europe, and opened the way for new powers to assert themselves.

The Baltic is the Black Sea of northern Europe (v. Map on p. 5). The two seas are not dissimilar in area. They drain, from opposite sides, the same parts of central Europe, and all along the watershed the upper courses of their rivers overlap. The importance of both as centres of commerce is discounted by bad winter conditions, and by the narrow outlets which almost transform them into lakes. But their greatest resemblance is in the fact that each lies at the extreme end of an important coastal area upon whose commercial exploitation its own fortunes must depend: and it was thus natural that, as the main lines of European trade shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic coast, the Baltic should inherit the commercial traditions of the Black Sea; and that, as timber and grain had once been carried through the Dardanelles to build the fleets and feed the citizens of Rome, so now Polish corn and Swedish pines should be shipped through the Sound to supply the needs of London and of Amsterdam.

The southern and eastern shores of the Baltic are

part of the flat coastal plain that runs from the Urals to
the Pyrenees. The formation of this coast is such that
it cannot be easily approached, or usefully developed,
except where the big north German rivers break
through the barrier-reef of marsh and sand. It was
from the river-towns and river-ports, such as Lübeck,
Stettin, and Danzig, that the Hansa League con-
trolled the commerce of the Baltic area. For a long time
the strategic centre of the League was not on the coast
at all—for the coast is the circumference of the Baltic
circle—but at its centre, in the Island of Gotland and
the town of Visby. Geographically speaking, the
Baltic area is an archipelago. Its essential land-forms
are islands, Dagö and Oesel off the Gulf of Riga, the
Åland Islands barring the Gulf of Bothnia, Gotland,
Öland, and Bornholm off the Swedish coast, Rügen
and the Danish islands blocking the western outlets.
Denmark itself is as much an island as a peninsula, the
north German rivers struggle into the sea past sand-
flats that might be described by either term, and the
string of lakes from Gothenburg to Stockholm marks
the fact that Scania is the central and largest island of
them all. Scania is, in fact, the clue to the Baltic area.
Separated from the rest of Scandinavia by its geological
formation, the character of its coast, its soil, and its
products, it has always been a bone of contention
between Denmark and Sweden, owing to its central
position, and its control of the Sound. Not 1648, when
the campaigns of Gustavus Adolphus gave Sweden the
ports of north Germany, but 1658, when Charles X
gained the shore of the Sound, was the real high-water
mark of Swedish power in the Baltic.

Sweden was better placed and endowed than any

other country for the mastery of the Baltic. Its trade
was firmly based on its mineral resources (Falun copper,
Sala silver-lead, and iron from Grängesberg), on its
splendid timber-forests (due to the short summers
and long winters of the sub-Arctic north), on its grain-
growing southern plains, and on the rich fisheries of
the old Baltic ports, Malmö, Skanör, and Falsterbo.
Though its population was too small for empire, the
backwoodsmen of the northern highlands provided Gus-
tavus Adolphus with the best soldiers in northern
Europe. When the old ports of southern Scania silted
up, in the seventeenth century, and when the herring-
shoals had left the Baltic, there were still Swedish
harbours and Swedish fishing-fleets on the western
coast outside the Sound, and the rivers of the north
still carried down to the Gulf of Bothnia some of the
best ship-timber in the world. It was, perhaps, a
mistaken ambition on the part of Gustavus and his
successors to aim at Baltic empire before Sweden itself
was properly developed and consolidated: but they
were following the tradition of the League of Kalmar
and the Hansa cities; and they were unconsciously
adapting the history of their country to the geographical
unity of the Baltic area.

But with 1658 Sweden's success ended. Her re-
sources were not adequate for empire. Her hold on
the German ports was conditional on the weakness of
Germany, and the complaisance of her French patrons.
When Brandenburg, under the Great Elector, began to
reach out for a northern coast-line, Pomerania was
bound to go. When Russia, under Peter the Great,
began to open doors into western Europe, the east
Baltic provinces were sure to break away. At the end

of the great Northern War (1721) nothing was left to Sweden but a scrap of western Pomerania, the island of Rügen, and the port of Stralsund—a place essential to Swedish navigation in the Baltic, and more central for Swedish interests than Stockholm itself. Stralsund in German hands would have been a pistol pointed at Scania and the Sound. Such in fact is its modern equivalent, Kiel. It had been a right instinct which led Gustavus Adolphus to the relief of the place, when it was threatened by Wallenstein. It was good statesmanship to cling to it, when everything else in Germany had to be given up.

II

But the immediate rival of Sweden in Baltic waters was not Brandenburg, but Russia. North Germany had its access to western culture overland, and indeed could not afford to become a maritime power until it had secured its continental frontiers. Russia, cut off from western Europe by the barbarous bulk of Poland, could not hope for civilization except by sea. Its old culture and religion had come from the south, by the Black Sea and the Dnieper. Peter the Great first tried to force this outlet, but found it closed by the Turks. Azof, gained in 1699, had to be surrendered in 1711. So he turned to the only other passage, reversed the still older route of the Varangian invaders, challenged and beat Charles XII (Poltava, 1709), built his new capital at St. Petersburg, and launched a Russian fleet on the Baltic. At the end of the Northern War (Treaty of Nystädt, 1721), he had not only added Carelia, Ingria, Esthonia, and Livonia to the territory of Russia, but he had also opened a new chapter in European history.

What part has been played by geography in the slow development of the Russian state? There is no country in Europe about which it is more tempting to give a dogmatic reply.

' These people in their millions were cut off for ages from all the lessons of Europe—lessons of Roman order, of Teutonic self-respect, of Feudal blending of self-respecting freedom with orderly loyalty to a person or a political ideal, of that inspiring of knowledge by zeal or that directing of zeal by knowledge which Europe learnt from the Renaissance and the Reformation. They therefore became an easy prey to the influence of a land where relief and climate are profoundly adverse to independence, initiative, individuality. And they must be still for ages foredoomed victims of any demand for blind obedience. . . . What does the future hold for these people, so intensely religious, so lacking in initiative, so much at the mercy of a tyrannical land, with a tyrannical climate, in which political or priestly tyranny is an unavoidable incident? ' [1]

This is good rhetoric; but is it good geography? No one will deny that the long isolation of the Russian people has lost them many opportunities of culture and of political education. But is there really any good reason to suppose that Russians are lacking in independence, initiative, or individuality just because they live in a flat country, which experiences extremes of heat and cold? or that ' political or priestly tyranny ' are any more ' unavoidable ' on one kind of subsoil or under one set of climatic conditions than another? An Englishman who lives in Russia accommodates himself to the flatness and to the climate, but he does not let them ' tyrannize ' over his political or religious opinions.

[1] Lyde, *The Continent of Europe*, p. 435.

A Russian who migrates to the Caucasus or the Hindu Kush accustoms himself to a narrower horizon and a hillier road, but he does not lose his habit of obedience, or his mystical turn of mind.

If we are to explain the peculiarities of the Russian national character, we must go first, not to the geography of the country, but to the racial make-up of the people. It is an aboriginal Slav, Lithuanian, and Finnish stock, upon which have been grafted a series of cuttings from Scythian, Sarmatian, Hun, Avar, Varangian, Tartar, and other invasions. We shall find in the traditions and needs of these tribes plenty of reasons why the Russian Government should be 'tyrannical', whether in the hands of a Tsar or of a Soviet Republic. And if we need an explanation of the 'priestly tyranny' under which the people are supposed to suffer, the obvious answer lies, not in the climate, but in the fact that Russia got its formal and superstitious Christianity from the dying capital of the Eastern Church.

Supposing, however, that these explanations still leave something unexplained, it is worth while to inquire what geography has to say (v. Map Q). Its first suggestion will be that the uniform flatness of so vast a country has not only encouraged invasion by nomad tribes, but has also militated against the formation of independent political units, and retarded the growth of political autonomy. The absence of natural features and divisions in the country has emphasized the lack of state-building instincts in the people, and helped to keep them under the priests, the landlords, and the Tsars. Again, the fact that Russia has no genuine seaboard, but only distant access to land-locked and frost-
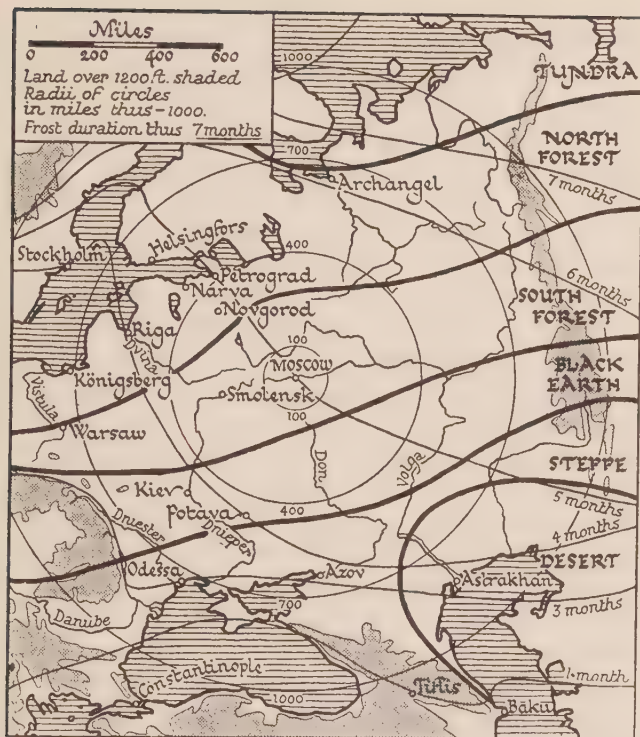
MAP Q. RUSSIA

Main features

1. Its size. The circles are drawn at 300 instead of 100-mile intervals. The whole of France and Spain could easily be fitted within the 400-mile circle.

2. Its flatness, for 700 miles in almost any direction from Moscow; and the lack of internal features or barriers.

3. Its river-system, providing (1) communications between centre and circumference, (2) outlets to four seas.

4. Its four sea-coasts: but only one is within 500 miles of the capital; two are ice-bound for several months of the year; two face seas whose outlets are held by foreign powers; and one has no outlet at all.

5. The climate, with its extremes of heat and cold, lack of rain, and long duration of winter frost.

bound seas, helps to account for its long isolation from
the culture of western Europe. It never looked west-
wards or seawards, but eastwards or landwards; and
this was due to the repeated influx of eastern peoples,
and to its cultural dependence on Constantinople.
Once more, owing to the sheer size of the country,
and its network of river-roads available during the
times of frost or flood, there has been little need or
attempt to provide a permanent system of land com-
munications: yet without this an efficient government
could hardly be carried on, nor could the country be
educated, or a public opinion be brought to birth.
Nevertheless in these matters a way would doubtless
have been found, if the need had been sufficiently felt.
In the last resort it is not the geography of Russia,
with its unrivalled rivers, its fertile corn-lands, its
forests and minerals, and its huge and docile labour-
market, which is to blame for the backwardness of
national industry and commerce, but the ingrained
character and traditions of the Russian people.

No better evidence of this could be desired than the
attempt made by Peter the Great to bring Russia within
the pale of European culture at the end of the seven-
teenth century. He could alter the communications of
the country by opening doors on to the Baltic and the
Black Sea. He could build a fleet according to the latest
fashion of Amsterdam or of Gravesend. He could
recruit and drill an army capable of defeating the
veterans of Charles XII. He could cut off the beards
and skirts of his Boyars. He could even tyrannize over
the tyrannical Church. But he could not alter the
ingrained slavishness of his subjects. His successors,
—Catherine I, Anne, Elizabeth, Catherine the Great—

ruled, not by national choice, but through foreign advisers, and by favour of the army. Russian art and literature were the work of a minority, educated in foreign ideas and studying their Russian inheritance through foreign eyes. It is only within the last few years, and under the Soviet system of government, that the Russian people has become a nation, and that its political instincts have been given scope for experiment and evolution.

III

In 1721 the control of the Baltic seemed to have passed completely from Sweden to Russia. Twenty years later this supremacy was challenged by a new power. Whilst, under Peter's successors, Russia looked more and more eastwards and southwards for the open doors which were denied to it in Poland, Prussia under Frederick the Great became the strongest state in northern Europe, and heir presumptive to the inheritance of the Hansa League. The time had at last come when the plain-lands of north Germany were to make their contribution to the trade and culture of Europe. It was long overdue. When it came, it came with the suddenness and completeness that often result from arrested development.

To what was this arrested development due? There is, of course, the basic fact that the first settlers of Europe preferred the south to the north, the Mediterranean to the Baltic, and that, having organized the Roman Empire, they set up a barrier along the Rhine and the Danube against the encroachment of the 'barbarians'. The result was that north Germany remained a roadless and cityless area cut off from the

life of the street and of the forum. When the barrier was down, and the central forests began to open up, development came, as we have seen, from the west, and travelled in haphazard fashion from the Rhine to the Elbe, and from the Elbe to the Oder, according to the chances of settlement, or the possibilities of commerce. Neither Charlemagne's empire nor Otto's provided that unity of government which had civilized southern Europe; and under the Holy Roman Emperors every tendency towards tribal disunion took on the name and sanction of patriotism. There could be no hope for Germany to play its proper part until its kaleidoscopic fragments grouped themselves into larger political units. This hardly began until the eighteenth century, and was not completed until the nineteenth.

But behind these political reasons lie others that are mainly geographical (*v.* Map R). First, the whole of Scandinavia and the north German plain was once the bed of a great glacier, whose terminal moraines can still be traced as far south as Glogau and Magdeburg: the result is that most of the soil is unfertile, and could not be made profitable, or carry a large population, before the discovery of scientific methods of agriculture. Secondly, the magnificent river-system of north Germany was for centuries robbed of much of its value, not only by the political divisions, local rivalries, and landlords' rights that strangled water-traffic, but also by seasonal drought (for none of these rivers are glacier fed), silting up (due to the sluggishness of their lower courses), and the frost-bound character of the Baltic coast (even more noticeable to the west than to the east); such natural handicaps, in fact, as could only be overcome by modern engineering appliances. Thirdly,

MAP R. GERMANY

1. The contrast between N. and S. Germany, which divides along a line running from Cologne to Cracow: the northern half plain-land, the southern mountainous; the northern draining into the North Sea and Baltic, the southern into the Black Sea. But notice the extent to which this difference is modified by the cutting back of the northern rivers, esp. the Main and Moldau, into the Danube basin. Consider the bearing of this on German national unity.

2. The unity of the N. German plain—esp. in relief and climate—contrasted with the disunity of the south, which divides into natural areas—Rhineland, Bavaria, Bohemia, Austria. Consider the historical effect of this contrast.

3. The position of Berlin as the link between the Elbe and Oder river-systems, and the meeting-point of N. and S. and E. and W. trade-routes. The configuration of this district favourable to canalization. The NW. trend of the N. German rivers favourable to an outlet into the North Sea rather than the Baltic. The influence of these facts on the growth of Prussia.

4. Austria distracted between open doors W. to the Rhine, N. to the Elbe, NE. to the Oder, SE. to the lower Danube (Black Sea or Aegean), and SW. to Italy. Vienna the meeting-point of all these routes, but a frontier-post v. Hungary, not a geographical centre. Its mountain defences pierced by the Danube, Elbe, Inn, and Oder. Consider what part these geographical facts play in Austrian history.

the eastward drift of the sea-currents, and the profusion of silt carried down by the rivers, have combined to produce those 'haffs', or lagoons, which are such a feature of the Pomeranian coast, and which make it so difficult to secure deep passages from the estuaries to the open sea. Fourthly, a variety of reasons—some of them political, such as the absence of Roman settlements, and the preoccupation of the Holy Roman Empire with less parochial affairs, and some of them geographical, such as the forest barriers, and the abundance of water-ways, delayed the provision of an adequate road-system for the north German plain.

It was not until the sixteenth century that the forces of the Renaissance and the Reformation, acting upon the new-born spirit of political independence, started the movement towards modern Germany. And it was no accident that the rise of Brandenburg, or Prussia, began during the last years of the Thirty Years' War. For that war marked the end of any attempt on the part of Austria to impose Imperial unity upon the German states, or on the part of the Hanseatic League to sacrifice the internal development of north Germany to its monopoly of foreign traffic. Henceforward the Baltic plain-lands could organize their own agriculture and commerce, link up their natural trade-routes, and give expression to their common aspirations.

The state which took the lead in this development was Prussia. That country had an uncommon advantage in its rulers, the painstaking and efficient Hohenzollerns; as it had also in the character of its colonists. But neither the patient hard work of its peasantry, nor the ability of its government, would have produced modern Prussia, unless they had been seconded by geographical

conditions favourable to the building up of a political
and commercial power.

What were these conditions? In the first place,
although the Hohenzollern estates were scattered up
and down the north German plain from the Vistula to
the Rhine, their political capital was also their geo-
graphical centre. By nature and history the north
German states depended on the great rivers. The two
most important of these, the Elbe and the Oder, form
what is virtually a single river-system, with head-
streams cutting back almost to the Danube, and tribu-
taries running north from the Bohemian mountains,
draining the whole central part of the northern plain
both into the Baltic and (this was of crucial importance)
into the North Sea. The centre of this river-system is
the point where the two rivers most nearly approach
one another, the Elbe bending eastwards and the
Oder westwards north of latitude 52 N. Just here
were Brandenburg and Berlin. The beds of the old
glacier-streams, by which the melting ice had once been
drained off to east and west, provided easy connexions
between the two rivers, and Berlin became the dis-
tributing centre of most of the water-borne trade of
north Germany. It was the Great Elector who foresaw
and started this development when he cut the Friedrich
Wilhelm canal from the Oder to the Spree. He knew
that Germany could no longer depend for its com-
mercial life upon the old trade-routes that ran north-
wards from the Alps. He knew (for the Thirty Years'
War had just proved it) that the Baltic was, for
Germany, a Dead Sea. He realized that the future
lay with the powers that could hold the Atlantic sea-
board. And, at a stroke, he turned the face of north

Germany from north to north-west, along the axis of the Elbe. At the same time, the sign-post of the Elbe, pointing from Hamburg towards Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Belgrad, and Constantinople, typified the whole policy of expansion that was afterwards to be called Pan-germanism.

There was also, besides this central position of Brandenburg, a singular uniformity of surface and climate to encourage the unifying tendencies of the Hohenzollern government. The whole plain, north of the Harz mountains, the Bohemian forests, and the Carpathians, is, geologically speaking, new land, with no more than recurrent changes of soil and configuration. There is a uniform temperature, like that of the uplands of eastern France, throughout the Weser, Elbe, and Oder valleys. Seasonal changes coincide from the head-waters of the Oder to the estuary of the Elbe. It is often said that Prussia has no natural frontiers, and this is true in the ordinary sense of the phrase, for there are no physical barriers across the Baltic plain; but it has enough individuality of scene and climate to make it the home of an intensely individual race. Here perhaps we go outside geography; but no attempt to explain Prussia is complete which leaves out of account the cultural-linguistic unity of Germany, from the French to the Polish frontier, and (with the important exception of Bohemia) from the Alps to the Baltic and North Sea, a unity which has been strong enough to absorb and assimilate the various immigrant strains that contributed to the colonization of Brandenburg-Prussia.

The gradual piecing together of the estates that composed modern Prussia is the most fascinating part of

the jig-saw puzzle of Germany. That this process had a determining aim follows from the central position and centralized control of Berlin. That it was also directed by considerations of geography will become apparent if we look at the positions of the acquired properties. Under the Great Elector, the founder of modern Prussia (1640–88), Brandenburg strengthened its hold on the Elbe and Weser (and thus its outlet to the North Sea) by the acquisition of Halberstadt, Minden, and Magdeburg. The annexation of Lower Pomerania, and the freeing of east Prussia from Polish suzerainty, gave it its first sea-frontage, though one poor in facilities for commerce. That the Elector had ambitious views of sea-power is shown by his founding Prussian colonies on the east coast of Africa. Arguin Island, or Agadir, just south of Cape Blanco, advertised Prussian sea-power more than two centuries before another place of the same name, and in the same latitudes, became the scene of a more famous demonstration. A group of settlements on the Gold Coast, whose names, commemorating members of the Electoral family, have disappeared from any but German maps, anticipated the fate of Togoland. Finally, the Great Elector showed a keen sense of the importance of the Rhine as an outlet for German trade when he secured the reversion to the Prussian inheritance of Cleve, Ravensburg, and Mark. If he failed to retain Upper Pomerania, which should have been his by the victory of Fehrbellin, it was not because he overlooked its importance for the maritime future of Prussia. And he was able to secure, as compensation for this loss, the succession to another coast-land estate, East Friesland, controlling the mouth of the river Ems. Thus, in the

course of a single reign, Prussia became, from a casual slice of barren heathland, a centralized group of states, with varied promise of political and commercial power.

Frederick William I, the Great Elector's grandson, secured a further hold on the lower Rhine by the acquisition of Spanish Gelderland, and an important outlet to the Baltic by winning from Sweden the town and district of Stettin.

The extent of Frederick the Great's gains for Prussia is a commonplace of history. The directions in which he sought to expand his territory were dictated by his grandfather's foresight, and by his own historical and geographical studies. Silesia, he saw, was by nature continuous with Brandenburg—there was no barrier between the upper and the lower Oder valley. Its industrial possibilities must be exploited from the low-lands through which alone its trade could flow to the sea. Strategically, it was the high road to Vienna. Politically, it was the counterweight to Saxony, and a Protestant buffer between Catholic Bohemia and Catholic Poland. So, where the Great Elector had claimed the tiny circle of Schwiebus, Frederick seized the whole province. There were even stronger geographical excuses, though no valid political reasons, for the first partition of Poland, which joined Lower Pomerania to East Prussia, and made Frederick's dominions continuous from the Weser to the Niemen, though it was not till after his death that the logic of the new situation was recognized by the Prussianiza-tion of Danzig, the natural outlet of the Vistula basin.

With these and later acquisitions the territory of Prussia became so varied that it lost much of its geographical unity, and an increasingly centralized

government, and an increasingly powerful army, were needed to hold together 'the rugged Lithuania, where the wild forests still sheltered the bison, and the smiling valleys of the Rhine and the Moselle, with their luxuriant vineyards, their gay and active population'.

Within the last few years political and racial considerations have once more restored a 'Polish corridor' between Pomerania and east Prussia, and made Danzig an international port. The geographical basis for this arrangement is the unity of the Vistula river-system. It remains an interesting problem, whether Polish nationality is strong enough to reinforce Polish geography so as to bear the cross-strains that will be put upon it by conflicting political and commercial interests.

IV

This, then, is the significance of the century from 1640 to 1740—that, with the development of Atlantic commerce, the Baltic area began to play its part in the history of Europe. It had hitherto been the back door of civilization: it now became the side door, if not the front. And for this role it was wonderfully fitted, in many ways, both by its natural resources, and by the character of its population. Its immense forests, its wide and often fertile plains, its inter-related river-systems, and its mineral wealth, were as undeveloped as the primitive virtues of its tribesmen. It has so quickly and thoroughly taken its place, since the eighteenth century, in the economy of Europe, that its newness and its lack of traditions are too easily forgotten.

Yet nothing is more significant than the survival of the Roman tradition in Europe, and the contrast

between the old countries that inherit it and the new
countries that do not. Right across Europe, from north-
west to south-east, runs a frontier more permanent
than any river or mountain range could provide, the
inviolable line between the Roman and the 'barbarian'
world. There still stretched, in the seventeenth century,
from the Rhineland to the Urals, and from the Car-
pathians to the Arctic Sea, a country almost as strange
to the traditions of Italy, France, and Spain as it had
been to those of the Roman Empire. Western ideas
had indeed groped their way east from the Rhine, and
north from the Alpine passes. Scattered cities had
grown rich by handling commodities mainly of foreign
extraction. A Saxon peasant had embodied the revolt
against Rome. A Polish astronomer had revolutionized
astronomy. But as yet no one knew what the German
people, slavish and silent under the tyranny of its
parochial state system, might have to contribute to
the common stock of culture. It was the work of the
warrior kings of Sweden, of that noble savage, Peter
the Great, and of the Hohenzollerns, the inspired
housekeepers of Prussia, to bring to light the natural
resources and the innate character of the new world
of the north; a more important discovery, perhaps,
than that of Columbus, and with more immediate con-
sequences for mankind.

The Franco-German quarrel is not a matter of
frontiers and coal-fields, but of a tradition which one
people has inherited and another has not. At the ex-
tremities of Europe there is something in common
between the religion of the Mozarabic Spaniard and
of the Byzantine Russian; but in the centre the Rhine-
land marks a cultural and spiritual fault-line. Or, on

a lower level, one can draw a frontier 'between the peoples who drink spirits and those who drink wine, between those whose social polity dates from the Forum, and those who still feel and legislate in terms of the primeval forest'.[1] This frontier neither the Holy Roman Empire, nor the Renaissance, nor the Napoleonic era, nor the League of Nations has been able to efface. Geography made it by prescribing, as the best defence of the Roman armies, the line of the Danube and of the Rhine. But geography cannot undo its work; and no man can join what nature has put asunder.

[1] Wharton, *French ways and their meaning*.

THREE CENTURIES OF
GROWTH OF REVOLUTION
1492 - 1792

A.D.

1500 — Dicovery of America, 1492

Machiavelli's "Principe", 1512
Reformation, 1517

Counter-Reformation, 1540
Copernicus' "De Revolutionibus", 1543

French Wars of Religion, 1562

1600 — Edict of Nantes, 1598

Bacon's "Novum Organum", 1620
Richelieu, 1624

Descartes' "Discours", 1637
The Fronde, 1648. Execution of Charles 1, 1649
Hobbes "Leviathan", 1650

Newton's "Principia", 1687
Locke's "Civil Government", 1690
1700 — Fénelon's "Télémaque", 1699. Vauban's "Dime Royale", 1699

Law's Bank, 1717

Voltaire's "Lettres Philosophiques", 1734

Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois", 1748
The Encyclopaedia, 1751
Quesnay's "Tableau Economique", 1758
Rousseau's "Contrat Sociale", 1762
Dissolution of Jesuits, 1773
Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations", 1776
Kant's "Critique", 1781
French Revolution, 1789
1800 — Fall of French Throne, 1792

IX. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THERE could be no better frontispiece to the eighteenth century, and at the same time no better example of how history and geography can be used together to reconstruct the life of the past, than the following passage descriptive of western Germany in the early years of the eighteenth century.

'A net-work of roads, like veins, was strung over the land, interlacing, branching, dwindling into nothing. They were neglected, full of stones and holes, torn up, overgrown, bottomless swamps in wet weather, and besides everywhere impeded by toll-gates. In the south, among the mountains, they narrowed into bridle-paths, and disappeared. All the blood of the land flowed through these veins. The bumpy roads, gaping with dusty cracks in the sun, heavy with mud in the rain, were the moving life of the land, its breath and pulse. Upon them travelled the regular stage-coaches, open carts without cushions or backs to the seats, jolting clumsily, patched and patched again, and the quicker post-chaises with 4 seats and 5 horses, which could do as much as 20 miles a day. There travelled the express couriers of courts and embassies, on good horses, with frequent relays, carrying sealed despatches, and the more leisurely messengers of the Thurn and Taxis post. There travelled journeymen with their knap-sacks, honest and dangerous, and students as lean and meek as the others were stout and saucy, and monks with discreet eyes, sweating in their cowls. There travelled the tilt-carts of the great merchants, and the hand-barrows of the peddling Jews. There travelled in 6 solid and somewhat shabby coaches the King of Prussia, who had been visiting south German courts, and his retinue. There travelled in an endless tail of men and cattle and coaches the Protestants whom the Prince-Archbishop of Saltzburg had driven with insults

from his country. There travelled gaily decked actors and soberly clad devotees, sunk in themselves; and in a magnificent calèche, with out-riders and a large escort, the lean and arrogant Venetian Ambassador to the court of Saxony. There travelled in disorder, on laboriously constructed vehicles, Jews deported from a middle-German city of the Empire, making for Frankfort. There travelled schoolmasters and noblemen, silken harlots and woollen clerks of the Supreme Court. There travelled comfortably with several coaches the plump, sly, and jolly-looking Prince-Bishop of Wurzburg, and on foot and out at elbows a Professor Landshut from the University of Bavaria, who had been dismissed for seditious and heretical opinions. There travelled with the agent of an English shipping company a party of Swabian emigrants, wives, dogs, children, and all, who wanted to go to Pensylvania; and pious, violent, and bawling pilgrims from lower Bavaria on the way to Rome; there travelled, with a rapacious, sharp observant eye on everything, the requisitioners of silver, cattle, and grain for the Viennese War Treasury, and discharged Imperial soldiers from the Turkish wars, and charlatans, and alchemists, and beggars, and young gentlemen with their tutors journeying from Flanders to Venice.'[1]

As for the historian the main change in the eighteenth century is the appearance of the new Powers—Russia and Prussia—upon the European stage, and the consequent complications in the old scheme of diplomacy, so the geographer finds that he can no longer take a wide view of a few simple factors, but that he has to allow for a more complex play of forces. At the same time, with the increasing mastery of man over nature, it becomes more and more difficult for him to dogmatize about the influence of geography upon human affairs.

[1] Feuchtwanger, *Jew Süss*, p. 3.

Every canal that joins two river-basins, every railway that tunnels a mountain range, every 'barrage' that converts a desert into a cornfield, every new method of throwing speech across space, alters the consequences of the natural laws that it obeys. Ultimately the only natural phenomena left for geography to exploit are those which civilization cannot regulate, such as the weather, the shrinkage of the earth's crust, or the influence of solar changes. Otherwise, as a mere description of forces, geography loses half its value: for it should lead from the science of understanding geographical influences to the art of controlling them.

Bearing these increasing disabilities in mind, we may proceed to ask in what respects geographical 'control' is still to be traced in the historical happenings of the eighteenth century.

I

It will be best to take one country at a time, and to begin with Prussia, both because we have just been dealing with it, and because the genius of Frederick the Great made it, from 1740 to 1789, the leading Power in Europe.

Frederick, as we have seen, had a very clear idea of the geographical situation of his country, and of the directions in which it should look for expansion. He had discovered, during his enforced residence at Cüstrin, how the trade of the Oder valley was taken out of the hands of Brandenburg by the merchants of Silesia. A letter of his is extant, dated 1731, in which he proposes to unify his inheritance by the acquisition of West Prussia, Pomerania, Mecklenburg, Jülich, and Berg. Soon after his accession a journey through

the western part of his territories showed him that it
would be a difficult matter to enforce his father's claims
upon Jülich and·Berg. There was as yet no opportunity
for joining Pomerania to East Prussia. But the timely
death of Charles VI, and the accession of his daughter
Maria Theresa, made it possible for an unscrupulous
man to seize, upon shadowy claims, and in defiance of
treaty obligations, the coveted province of Silesia. All
the battles that followed, from 1740 to 1763, were fought
in defence of this act of political brigandage.

In these wars Frederick enjoyed, and knew that he
enjoyed, some very definite geographical advantages.
He had, no doubt, to fight on three fronts; to the
south-west, against the French; to the south, against
the Austrians; and to the east, against the Russians.
But in each direction he could march through easy
level country, and meet his enemies within 100, or,
in the case of Silesia, it might be 150 miles from his
capital, whilst they had to converge by lines of far
greater length, and co-operate on much more difficult
ground. Again, with the main streams of the Elbe and
the Oder to guard his flanks against the French and
Russians, he could use the western tributaries of the
Oder as a series of lines of defence against an Austrian
advance from Silesia. Thirdly, though the Bohemian
mountains push out a natural bastion from the Danube
valley into the northern plain, yet there were so few
roads across them that it was an easy matter, by the
occupation of Neisse or Dresden, to convert them from
a danger into a defence. Summarily, Frederick's posi-
tion in the Seven Years' War was not unlike that of
Napoleon in the Defence of Paris in 1814. If the final
result was different, it was due, as he himself admitted,

more to the mistakes of his enemies than to his own skilful use of the ground.

II

Frederick's lifelong enemy was Austria. This country had always been distracted by rival claims of race, religion, and language. Its capital, Vienna, was no less unhappily distracted by rival tendencies of race and geography (v. Map on p. 125). It stood in what seemed a central position on the greatest river of central Europe. But the upper Danube was German, and belonged by nature and civilization to the Rhine valley, and the best roads ran across it, linking up Italy with north Germany; whilst the lower Danube was Slav, and led away from all European interests to the Balkans and the Black Sea; and in both directions easy access was denied by the heights which strangle the valley-neck at Passau and Pressburg. Of the other rivers that affect Austria, the Inn points the way to Italy, and the Elbe to north Germany—but both over mountain barriers. The only 'open door' to Austria is the 'Moravian Gap', leading to the Oder valley; and that, like the upper Danube valley, is not an exit, but an entrance, and has more often been a source of danger to the country than an opportunity for offence. In short, the Danube land reproduces on a larger scale the apparent unity of the Rhineland, together with its real unfitness for political independence.

Maria Theresa must have been fully conscious of these handicaps when faced by the concerted attack of Prussia and France in 1741. Bohemia, invaded from three sides at once, could not be held. Its subsequent recapture, and the driving back of the French to the

Rhine, still left Silesia unrecovered, and (as the event showed) irrecoverable. The only hope was to turn Frederick's use of geography against himself. By the 'reversal of alliances' in 1756 he was put into the same position in which Maria Theresa had found herself fifteen years before, and attacked on three sides at once. How he extricated himself has already been described.

We have mentioned Austria's preoccupation with the Inn valley and the upper Danube. This was the point at issue in the so-called War of Bavarian Succession in 1778–9, and in the negotiations that ended in the Treaty of Fontainebleau in 1785. It was worth almost anything to Austria, especially after the experiences of 1741, to push back the frontier of Francophil Bavaria, and to safeguard the route to Italy by the valley of the Inn. It was certainly worth the pensioning of an Elector, and even the exchange of the distant Netherlands, where the jealousy of England and Holland had so often stood in the way of commercial development. But all that Joseph II was able to secure, by the Treaty of Teschen (1780), was a strip of territory from Passau to Wildshut, i.e. a frontier on the east bank of the Inn, and a few miles of extra security against an attack from the west.

III

France, in the years following the Treaty of Utrecht, experienced a reaction against all the things for which the age of Louis XIV had stood. And yet, long before the end of the eighteenth century, it had passed through this stage, repeated the development from commercial to military aims out of which it had just emerged, and ended in a second and greater reaction, the Revolution

of 1789. From 1717 to 1740 the unaccustomed experi-
ence of peace, and the stimulating influence of Law's
financial experiments, backed by the economical and
laisser-faire government of Cardinal Fleury, turned the
attention of the country to its colonies, and led to
a considerable improvement in the condition of the
classes dependent on trade and agriculture. It seemed
as though France might take up once more the role
that Colbert had assigned to it, and become the leading
industrial and commercial power in Europe. But there
were too many influences working in the opposite
direction—the marriage of Louis XV to a Polish princess,
which committed the country to supporting her father's
claims in the War of Polish Succession (1733); the
reversion of Lorraine, promised as a result of this war,
and a source of anxiety until it was finally accomplished
in 1766; the growth of causes of friction between
English and French colonists in India and North
America; and the unfortunate prejudice which made
the army the only profession (other than the Church)
for a French gentleman, and therefore gave the war
party an undue preponderance at Court. Thus, when
the Fleury-Walpole entente was broken by the death
of the one in 1743, and the retirement of the other in
1742, France had already been hurried into war with
England and Austria, its traditional enemies on sea
and land. The war of Austrian Succession, in which
France played an undignified part as the dupe of
Prussia, was followed by the Seven Years' War, in
which it risked more, and gained even less, as the dupe
of Austria. It was not until the last quarter of the
century, and during the foreign ministry of Vergennes
(1774–87), that the country regained its lost prestige.

French historians have often lamented the *défaillances* of their country during the eighteenth century, and counted the opportunities lost in India and America during the wars of Frederick the Great. The geographer can agree. France was not made for purely continental interests. Facing three seas, she cannot healthily ignore their suggestions of maritime adventure and colonial empire. Colbert and Choiseul were right when they preferred the Atlantic seaboard to the Rhine frontier, and said that England was the enemy, not Austria. It is a geographical error to treat Alsace-Lorraine, the back door of France, as though it were the front. Security is all that is needed on that side. On the other side lie all the opportunities of expansion and progress. The Seine, the Loire, and the Garonne flow towards America; the Rhone towards Africa and the Levant. If the French statesmen of the eighteenth century had constructed ships instead of armies, made commercial instead of dynastic alliances, and supported their countrymen overseas, what an instance the geographers might have had of a country's natural destiny fulfilled!

It was in eastern Europe that the political adventures of France in the eighteenth century went most contrary to geographical facts. The impossibility of backing by force its commitments in Poland involved it in the disgrace of standing by while the father-in-law of Louis XV fled from Danzig in the disguise of a coachman, and while rival powers, two of whom were its nominal allies, partitioned a kingdom that it professed to protect. If greater success marked the efforts to prevent the partition of Turkey, this was due to French diplomacy, and to the tradition of a Franco-Turkish entente in the Levant, rather than to any geographical connexion

between Paris and Constantinople. It was as ambassador in Turkey that Vergennes gained the experience which enabled him to restore the international prestige of his country.

IV

The affairs of Poland and Turkey constituted 'the Eastern Question' in the eighteenth century; and it is with that question that our inquiry must end.

'The East' is an ambiguous term. Geographically speaking, the whole western hemisphere is a single land-mass: certainly Europe and Asia are one continent ('Eurasia'), not two. The traveller who crosses the Urals at Zlatoust would hardly be conscious of the transition, were it not for the obelisk by the side of the railway marked on the one side 'Asia', and on the other 'Europe'. If there is any real frontier between the two continents, he would be inclined to place it much further west, and to determine it by something more momentous than a mountain range. For there certainly are characteristics of race, religion, and culture which mark off the Oriental from the Occidental, and if we could mark their limits on the map we should know where Europe ended and where Asia began. But can we?

We have already commented more than once on the importance of the Rhine-Danube line as an inter-European frontier, dividing (on the whole) the old nations of the south from the new nations of the north. We have now to recognize the hardly less important frontier that runs from the Baltic to the Adriatic, dividing the European from the Asiatic peoples. It cannot be represented by a single line on the map, but

it lies between Long. 12 and 24 E. (*v.* Map S), where
the German Catholic or Protestant block from the west
has clashed and intermixed with the Russian Orthodox
block from the east. In the extreme north the eastward
advance of German Protestantism and the expansion
of East Prussia have almost, but not quite, obliterated
the Polish Catholic 'corridor' west of Danzig. South
comes the great bulk of Poland—geographically the
basin of the Vistula, whose tributaries converge on
Warsaw, racially a buffer state between Germans and
Russians, but partitioned by religious minorities of
Protestants and Orthodox long before its political parti-
tion by the rival Powers in 1772. Down to this point,
from the Baltic coast to the line of the Carpathians and
the Bohemian mountains, the frontier that we are seek-
ing to fix depends upon whether the Poles make good
their claim to inclusion among the western nations:
provisionally it would appear to fall more naturally
east than west of that country, along the line running
south from Dvinsk to Czernovitz which was that of the
second Polish partition of 1793 and of the Treaty of
Versailles in 1921.

At this point Poland is cut off southwards by the
non-geographical but racial state of Czecho-Slovakia,
whose short eastern frontier may be taken to continue
the line from Czernovitz. But then follows the most
complex area of all, from the Carpathians to the
Adriatic, in which two main blocks of Magyars and Serbs
are intermixed with German, Rumanian, Bulgarian,
and Albanian minorities; and where Catholic, Ortho-
dox, Protestant, and even Mohammedan believers live
side by side. Through this sector it is impossible to
determine a frontier between east and west. Either it

MAP S. RACES OF CENTRAL EUROPE

runs south-westwards from Czernovitz to Fiume at the head of the Adriatic, and excludes all the Balkan peoples; or it includes them, and runs south-eastwards to the mouth of the Danube. The former line recognizes the Turkish invasion of this part of Europe as the basis of the distinction between western and eastern: the latter assumes that the frontier of the Roman Empire is more decisive still.

In any case it was the ambiguous zone of Polish and Turkish territory traversing the continent from the Baltic to the Adriatic, and dividing eastern from western Europe, that brought intrigues and wars upon the neighbouring powers, very much as the corresponding zone of the 'Middle Kingdom' brought trouble to the nations in the west.

Poland, as we have said, was geographically the basin of the Vistula. But this area had no natural frontiers, except the sea in the north and the Carpathians in the south-west; and most of the former had been lost since the cession of east Prussia to the Hohenzollerns in 1618. Its long open boundaries to east and west were rendered the more indefensible, and at the same time the more tempting to aggressors, by the fringes of racial and religious minorities which entangled them with Prussia on the one side and Russia on the other. There was no geographical obstacle to Frederick the Great's desire for the acquisition of West Prussia. If the Russians were to advance their frontier to the line of the Dvina and Dnieper (as they did in 1772), geography would be on their side: they could push it 200 miles further west (as they did in 1793) without encountering any natural obstacles. The only one of the three partitioning powers whose advance in 1772

transgressed natural limits was Austria. Her claim to
Galicia got as little support from geography as it did
from race or religion. The Carpathians were her
obvious frontier north-eastwards. It was, indeed, only
the fear of being left behind in the race for taxable
land, and subjects who could be turned into soldiers,
that reconciled her statesmen to this acquisition. They
would have preferred new territory in the lower Danube
valley.

V

This brings us to the second part of the Eastern
Question in the eighteenth century—the Turkish hold
upon south-eastern Europe, and the attempts of Austria
and Russia to shake it off.

The scene of these wars is the Danube valley, and
the clues to their understanding are to be found in the
geographical features of this part of Europe. The
Danube flows from the Black Forest to the Black Sea
in a series of 'reaches' separated by 'locks'. The
first ends at Passau, the second at Pressburg, the third
at the Iron Gates, and the fourth at the delta. To the
incoming armies of the Turks, in the sixteenth or
seventeenth century, it was easy enough, once past
the Iron Gates (or Belgrad), to navigate the Hungarian
plain; but no endeavour could carry them past the
barrier of the hills of Pressburg and the walls of
Vienna. When the Austrians, in the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries, reversed the movement, they too
found it easy to overrun the Hungarian plain, but
almost impossible to carry their advance beyond Bel-
grad. It is this geographical peculiarity of the Danube
basin, quite as much, perhaps, as the political and

military peculiarity of the Turks, which explains the spasmodic ebb and flow of the tide of invasion on the eastern European shore.

The next feature to notice is the position of Belgrad. It is the central point of the whole area, nearly half-way between Vienna and Constantinople, and the meeting-place of not less than three important routes in either direction. Coming from Vienna, it is at Belgrad that the traveller chooses whether to go east down the Danube to the Black Sea, or south-east over the plateau of Sofia to Constantinople, or south by the Morava and Vardar valleys to Salonica. Coming from Constantinople, it is at the same spot that he must diverge either north-west, for Italy, or north, for Vienna, or north-east, for the Hungarian plain. This explains the immense importance of Belgrad in the wars and diplomacy of the eighteenth century. To hold Belgrad was almost to hold Hungary, *or* Rumania.

The position of this last country—known then as Wallachia (the western part) and Moldavia (the eastern) is the third point of geographical interest. Defended on the north by the Carpathians, and on the south by the curve of the Danube, it can be entered either at its north-west corner through the Iron Gates, or at its north-east, from Bessarabia. In the eighteenth century Austria was knocking at the first door, Russia at the second. The second was the easier to open. Wallachia was overrun by the Russian armies in 1770, and came permanently under Russian influence after 1772; though, if the provisions of the Austro-Russian plan for the Partition of Turkey (1787) had ever been carried out, it would have become Austrian.

Russia was, in fact, interested in an even more

valuable prize, Constantinople. The way to this lay, not through Wallachia, but along the western shore of the Black Sea. It is an illustration of the natural difficulties of this route, and the strength of Turkey's geographical defences on this side, that the task was never accomplished. The Danube delta, the trackless and waterless Dobruja, the eastern spurs of the Balkans, and the almost desert conditions of the march, kept Constantinople as safe from the Christian as it had long been from the Turk.

Thus in the end both Russia and Austria were robbed of the fruits of their wars and intrigues. The perverse eastern trend and final northward turn of the lower Danube, together with the reversed-S-shaped configuration of the Carpathian-Balkan range, made it as easy for both of them to clash with each other's interests as it was difficult for either to penetrate the defences of their common enemy. Nor has any subsequent attempt to turn the Turk out of Europe been much more fortunate. Constantinople has indeed been thrice armed by the jealousies of the rival powers. None the less it remains the strongest natural fort in east Europe, a fitting counterpart of Gibraltar. And with the decision that Constantinople shall remain in the hands of the Turks, modern history has made a full round, and come back to its starting-point.

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